Why Good Hospitals Die JONATHAN COHN

THE

NEW REPUBLIC

Are Libraries Killing B
ALEXANDER STAR

Is GOP Diversity Killin
Democrats? PETER BEIN

MAY 28, 2001

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BY ROBERT BRUSTEIN

NOT SPRINGT FOR HITLE

BY LEON WIESELTIE

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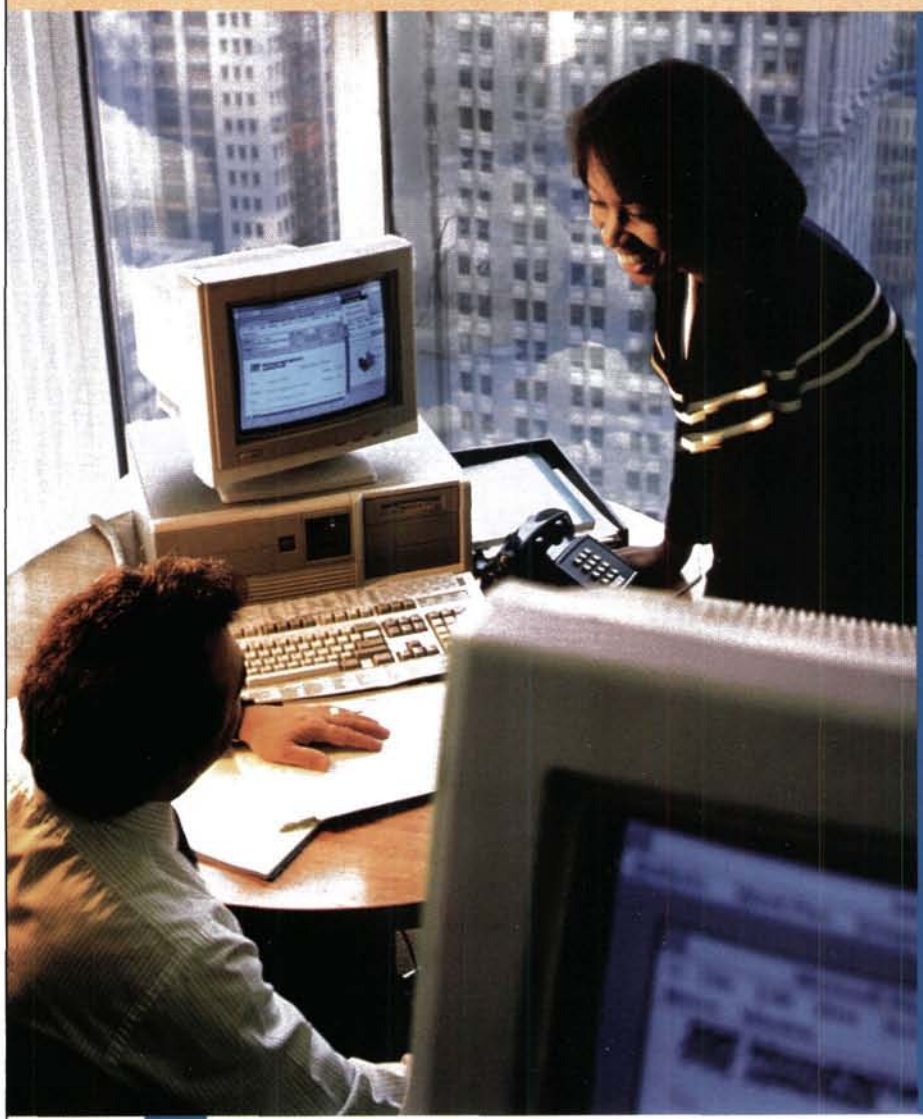

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A Journal of Politics and the Arts

WASHINGTON, D.C.
MAY 28, 2001
ISSUE 4,506

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On the Web: www.thenewrepublic.com

THE NEW REPUBLIC, Vol. 224, Number 22, Issue 4,506, May 28, 2001. (Printed in the United States on May 16, 2001.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated January 1 & 8, April 9 & 16, July 9 & 16, August 27 & September 3, 2001 and December 31, 2001 & January 7, 2002) at 1220 19th Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20036. Telephone (202) 331-7494. For advertising inquiries, please contact Ann Rossaki at (202) 331-7494 or our NY sales office at (212) 924-8700. Yearly subscriptions, $59.94; foreign, $99.94 (U.S. funds); Canada, $79.94 (U.S. funds). Back issues, $4.00 (includes postage & handling). **© 2001 by The New Republic, Inc.** **(ISSN 0028-6583). Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. Rights and permissions: fax (202) 331-0275. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. Microform, Canadian Periodical Index, CD-ROM, issue, and article copies are available through University Microfilms Intnl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Telephone 1-800-521-0600. Postmaster: Send changes of address to The New Republic, P.O. Box 37298, Boone, IA 50037-0298. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope (e-mail address: tnr@aol.com). For subscription inquiries or problems call 1-800-827-1289 or visit our website at www.thenewrepublic.com.**

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CORRESPONDENCE

Sullied

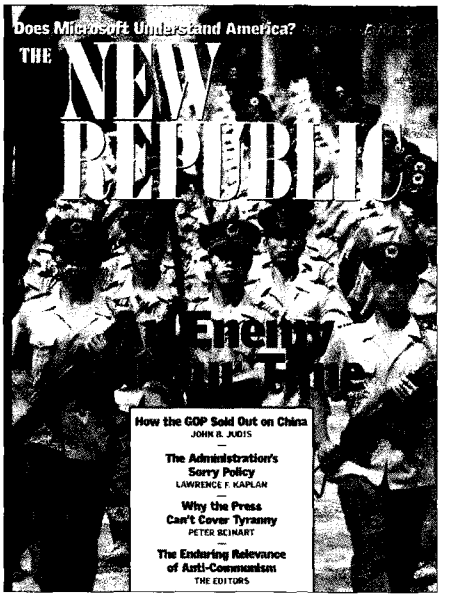
TO THE EDITORS:

John B. Judis's long diatribe against the Heritage Foundation, claiming we've become too cozy with Communist China because we've been "bought" by the PRC ("Sullied Heritage," April 23), is so full of holes it looks like defective Swiss cheese. Incredibly, Judis admits he has "no evidence" to support his 7,000-word web of fabrication and innuendo. But he "reports" it anyway. The Heritage Foundation's position on Communist China is unchanged. Sure, we have toned down our rhetoric over the years. But that doesn't mean we're any less concerned about China's military or about Taiwan's security. And we have published dozens of policy papers and hosted numerous conferences and panel discussions to make that point. We have always favored trade with China but have consistently pointed out that America's relationship with China is not one-dimensional, based on trade alone. China's military modernization, expansion, and belligerence; Taiwan's security; and human and political rights are also key parts of the equation.

Judis suggests we replaced the hard-line director of our Asian Studies Center with someone more accommodating to the PRC. Wrong: We replaced one hard-line director with another, this one with years of senior-level military experience, a doctorate, and special expertise in the area of export controls to China.

Judis also suggests we were all but silent during the recent EP-3 incident. We were anything but silent—and anything but soft. No, we didn't suggest dropping a 100,000-megaton letter of apology on downtown Beijing. But we did suggest a hard-line U.S. position. And our people were selling our views virtually around the clock, appearing on talk-radio programs around the country, as well as Fox News's "Hannity and Colmes," Fox News Live, NPR's "All Things Considered" and "Talk of the Nation," C-SPAN's "Washington Journal," MSNBC Live, and the Voice of America. This is some of the evidence Judis missed.

The Heritage Foundation has never knowingly accepted any money from the PRC—not from the government, not from state-owned enterprises, and not from private businesses. To suggest that our policies are swayed by corporate contributions is ludicrous. Last year, for example, corporate contributions from all sources amounted to just 4 percent of our total income. We would no more jeopardize our independence and reputation for these



contributions than THE NEW REPUBLIC would sell its soul to its advertisers.

Judis's article was short on facts and documentation and long on conspiracy theories. The reason is simple: There are no facts to back it up.

EDWIN J. FEULNER
President
The Heritage Foundation
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITORS:

You've got to hand it to John B. Judis: His lurid tale of Communist Chinese influence at the Heritage Foundation is entertaining, high-camp fiction. But even more interesting is Judis's own precipitous slide from begging Naderites to vote for Al Gore (in full-page ads last fall) to picking through the intellectual dumpsters of reactionary websites and peddling their neo-racist conspiracy theories as his own. Judis's stunning lapses of journalistic ethics are echoed throughout "Sullied Heritage," a virtual self-parody of tabloid smarminess. Lacking hard facts, Judis uses every cheap trick of the trade to concoct a "sinister scandal" that would have made Joe McCarthy proud: unnamed sources (relied upon 22 times); unanswered accusatory questions (at least six times); heavily qualified insinuations of guilt (at least seven times). At any point one expects Judis to announce that he has a list in his vest pocket of Communists at the Heritage Foundation.

It's all the equivocations and disclaimers in Judis's article that give the game away, as he repeatedly admits: "There is no evidence ... it is impossible to dismiss the possibility ... it is conceivable ... [i]t's possible ... and in the absence of public disclosure, speculation about Chinese influence will continue ... as a result, perhaps ... [w]ithout knowing ... [t]hat's just speculation." When you blow away the flimsy accusations propped up by these disclaimers, all that's left is xenophobic hysteria.

Judis manages to get one fact right. Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao did inadvertently omit from her public financial disclosure one company on whose board she briefly sat: Multacom, a U.S. broadband Internet firm that is active in Taiwan and China. Chao never received any money for her eight-month stint, and her involvement was limited to one half-hour conference call. She is making a routine revision of her disclosure form to add that information, a fairly common occurrence with such detail-intensive documents.

Which leads to the final point. What Judis has "sullied" by his racially tinged rant is not the Heritage Foundation nor Chao but the once-proud pages of TNR. To quote Judis's own closing line: "Once upon a time, things would have been different."

STEVEN J. LAW
Chief of Staff
U.S. Department of Labor
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITORS:

In "Sullied Heritage," John B. Judis manages to spew forth more than 7,000 words that sully only himself and possibly the journalism profession. Judis burns up seven pages breathlessly connecting rumor with hearsay with innuendo to imply that my positions on U.S. China policy have been bought by Chinese sympathizers and the Chinese government. In fact, Judis hurls more than 30 allegations in his tirade, relying almost exclusively on shadowy, unnamed sources. If you're going to insinuate that a U.S. senator is a Communist sympathizer, shouldn't you at least be required to show a scintilla of evidence and name a few sources?

Even Judis is forced to concede that his McCarthyite story of allegations without evidence originated on a "conspiracy-minded right-wing website" and that the story "has never made the mainstream press." A review of my record in the Senate demonstrates to any objective observer that my fundamental position toward China remains unchanged. I make no apologies for condemning China when it violates human rights or illegally detains U.S. citizens, while also working to engage China in trade opportunities that benefit the United States and expand democratic and capitalist influence.

continued on page 48

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Texas Wild!

No, the title does not refer to crazed football fans or chili-cooking contests.

Rather, *Texas Wild!* is the name of a major new wildlife exhibit that is opening June 15 at the nationally prominent Fort Worth Zoo.

Why should anyone outside the Lone Star State care about an exhibit at the Fort Worth Zoo? Because this path-breaking exhibit has been created to make some positive points about the relationship of human beings to nature.

Nature is often seen as something that is apart from mankind, with the natural world being constantly threatened by human activities.

This view works its way into politics. Increasingly, federal lands have been set aside, and all sorts of human activities other than limited recreational visiting have been either banned or highly circumscribed. Similarly, the Endangered Species Act has sometimes been used to stop development of private lands in order to prevent what is assumed will be damage to particular species of animals, plants or insects.

By contrast, newer government programs such as Habitat Conservation Plans and Candidate Conservation Agreements have encouraged private conservation efforts.

Texas Wild! builds on this new approach and **shows how nature can not only coexist with human activities, but also flourish**.

The starting point is the fact that 97 percent of Texas land is private property, and only two other states have more animal species. Private ownership and private land development have proven to be compatible with the natural environment in Texas.

Although many animals have successfully adapted to human activities, *Texas Wild!* also shows how important it has been for government and private citizens to cooperate in managing the fate of other species. Alligators, redfish, wood ducks, pelicans and bald eagles have all been elevated from a threatened status to robust populations. Other species such as the aplomado falcon and the whooping crane still require protection but are coming back.

Nature not only can coexist with human activities, but flourish

Overall, the theme of *Texas Wild!* is that man is an integral part of nature and that **a combination of private ownership, conservation sensitivity, and cooperative management can be successful in preserving the natural world around us**.

Texas Wild! has drawn a wide array of supporters, including ExxonMobil. Its national advisory board includes officials with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Audubon Society, the World Wildlife Fund, and The Peregrine Fund. It also includes several university participants and leaders of think tanks such as Reason Foundation and the Political Economy Research Center, which have been at the forefront of promoting private-sector solutions to environmental concerns.

This is broad and distinguished support for what is a unique exhibit with a refreshing point of view. We heartily recommend a visit to *Texas Wild!*

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

Enjoy

THERE'S A LITTLE bottle in my medicine cabinet, prescribed by my doctor. The pills are perfectly spherical, opaque, and shiny, like tiny pearls. The medication is called Marinol. It's an anti-nausea medication I take sometimes to deal with what most people on the AIDS cocktail manage day after day, meal after meal. The pills are perfectly legal, and their active component is THC, the main active ingredient in marijuana, which human beings have known for centuries to be able to cure an upset stomach and increase appetite.

Unfortunately, Marinol isn't that good a drug. The relief from nausea quickly dissipates; even the docs prescribing the stuff don't believe it's as effective as the real thing.

So why can't I legally have the real thing? This week, as expected, the Supreme Court struck down an appeal from some cannabis collectives in California for an exemption from a federal law banning marijuana distribution. It turns out this Court isn't the highest in the land after all. (Bada-bing.) But, of course, the Court is simply interpreting a pretty transparent law that bans pot distribution for medical use—so transparent that I'm surprised the Supremes even took the case. The deeper issue is why our society bans medical marijuana at all.

The answer, to anyone who has ever swallowed a Marinol pill, is obvious. The illegal thing in pot is not THC; it's pleasure. The only difference between the pill and a toke is enjoyment. Sure, there's some risk of inhaling smoke into your lungs—but cigarettes are legal (at least until the Democrats win back Congress). The physical dangers of pot-smoking are trivial compared with the dangers of, say, alcohol, even if you factor in an unusually large case of the munchies. And, compared with nicotine or caffeine, marijuana is about as addictive as Gatorade. Yes, you can get psychologically addicted to it—but the same can be said about watching "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?" or subscribing to THE NEW REPUBLIC.

No, what the government is worried about is that you might actually have some fun while conquering your nausea. It's enjoyment that the feds want to outlaw. Bush's prospective drug czar, John Walters, seems to believe that a person who derives pleasure from smoking a plant is immoral because he's pleasantly altering his consciousness. But why? Is drinking alcohol immoral? Is the physical and mental enjoyment of a fine wine more moral than the physical and mental enjoyment of a joint? Beats me if I can find any distinction that isn't based on irrational panic.

Besides, we often feel pleasure because we're doing our bodies good. And, sure enough, marijuana's medicinal qualities—for a wide variety of physical problems—are now a matter of record, whatever Congress says. A fascinating piece in last Monday's *Los Angeles Times* recounted scientists' discoveries about weed's effects on mental and physical functioning. It turns out that marijuana affects a whole range of what are called cannabinoid receptors, and these receptors in turn regulate any number of physical functions. The *Times* reported that "[i]t is now known that THC mimics chemicals made naturally by our brains—chemicals that influence a smorgasbord of bodily functions including movement, thought and perception. Studying these brain chemicals (known as 'endogenous cannabinoids') is increasing our understanding of an array of medical conditions—among them pain, Parkinson's disease, Tourette's syndrome and memory loss. Drug companies are working busily to develop new therapies based on this knowledge." In other words, marijuana works on the human mind and body because it mimics substances *we already have*, substances that God or evolution gave us. It merely elevates feelings we are already programmed to feel—but in a way that might both heal illness and give pleasure.

Of course, other, more dangerous drugs do this as well. They mimic adrenaline highs or serotonin rushes. But, unlike these other drugs, which have little or no therapeutic value and which require elaborate manufacture or processing, marijuana is a medicine that grows in the earth. It has been used medicinally for centuries. Banning it not only robs us of potential medical breakthroughs—since more widespread use would likely turn up new and unthought-of effects—but it also denies people what should be a perfectly legal pleasure. The tired argument that pot is a "gateway drug" to more serious narcotics is a fallacy. Sure, if you ask hardened drug addicts whether they started with pot, they usually say yes. But I doubt many of them are teetotalers, either. Why wasn't their first beer a gateway drug? And if you ask a bunch of white-collar professionals in their fifties whether they have ever smoked marijuana, they'd probably say yes as well. My favorite example of this is Al Gore. Here's a man who, by all accounts, smoked weed in college. For him, it was a gateway to one of the most responsible careers in public life you can imagine. Yet he was vice president in an administration that presided over almost five million arrests for marijuana use in eight years. The sole tangible way in which pot is a gateway to other illegal drugs is that it is illegal. The best way to end this easy path to worse narcotics is to legalize it and take it out of the hands of criminals and gangs.

Besides, it is only our puritanical culture that insists that health and pleasure are incompatible. Nature suggests the opposite. Good health is deeply, subtly pleasurable. And pleasure—with its reduction of stress and encouragement of positive thinking—is related to good health. I think of an old friend of mine with AIDS who, in a matter of months, turned from a strapping man into a skeleton. He had almost no immune system and no appetite. He spent most of his days in bed, trying to keep himself from throwing up his medications, moving from time to time to take the pressure off his bedsores, and listening to music as he faded in and out of fevered consciousness. Then he smoked pot. His distress eased; he loved listening to music more and more; his appetite slowly came back. He survived long enough to get the protease inhibitors that saved his life. He's now fit and healthy. He has no doubt that pot saved him.

And pleasure was part of his recovery. It helped dissipate the appalling pain and depression that beset him. It made him human again, because a central part of being human is the enjoyment of life's pleasurable gifts—physical, intellectual, artistic, culinary, mental. We need to play as much as we need to eat and sleep. It is bizarre that, in a country founded in part on the pursuit of happiness, we should now be expending so many resources on incarcerating and terrorizing so many people simply because they are doing what their Constitution promised. Pleasure isn't the same thing as happiness, of course, but the responsible, adult enjoyment of the pleasure of something God gave us is surely part of it. Our continued attack on a medicine that, by some divine fluke, is also highly enjoyable demeans everyone who participates in it. If you'll pardon the expression, it's high time we ended it.

ANDREW SULLIVAN

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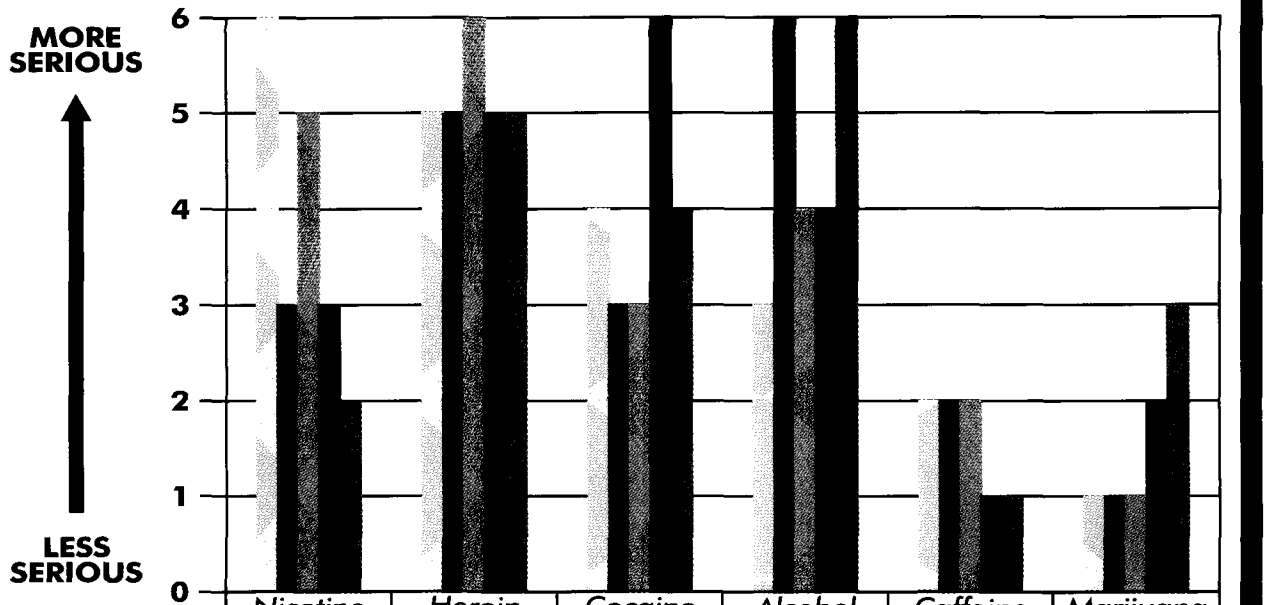
Do Our Drug Laws Focus on the Truly Dangerous Drugs?

Comparing Dangers of Popular Drugs

(Lower score indicates less serious effect)



	Nicotine	Heroin	Cocaine	Alcohol	Caffeine	Marijuana
DEPENDENCE	6	5	4	3	2	1
WITHDRAWAL	4	5	3	6	2	1
TOLERANCE	5	6	3	4	2	1
REINFORCEMENT	3	5	6	4	1	2
INTOXICATION	2	5	4	6	1	3

Source: *Dr. Jack E. Henningfield, Ph.D. for NIDA. Reported by: Philip J. Hilts, New York Times, Aug. 2, 1994 "Is Nicotine Addictive? It Depends on Whose Criteria You Use."*

Does Jailing Marijuana Users Make More Sense than Jailing Coffee Drinkers?

Kevin B. Zeese, President, Common Sense for Drug Policy
3220 "N" Street, NW, #141, Washington, D.C. 20007 * info@csdp.org * 703-354-9050 * fax 703-354-5695
Please visit www.csdp.org and www.drugwarfacts.org

Dependence: *How difficult it is for the the user to quit, the relapse rate, the percentage of people who eventually become dependent, the rating users give their own need for the substance and the degree to which the substance will be used in the face of evidence that it causes harm.*
Withdrawal: *Presence and severity of characteristic withdrawal symptoms.*
Tolerance: *How much of the substance is needed to satisfy increasing cravings for it, and the level of stable need that is eventually reached.*
Reinforcement: *A measure of the substance's ability, in human and animal test, to get users to take it again and again, and in preference to other substances.*
Intoxication: *Though not usually counted as a measure of addiction in itself, the level of intoxication is associated with addiction and increases the personal and social damage a substance may do.*

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Anti-Semitism. It's not a HISTORY LESSON, it's a CURRENT EVENT.

Many people would like to think anti-Semitism is no longer a major issue. Unfortunately, anti-Semitic incidents continue throughout the world.

In Egypt, anti-Jewish stereotypes are prevalent in cartoons featured in many newspapers. In Austria, right-wing leader Joerg Haider recently introduced anti-Semitism into a political campaign. In Russia, attacks on Jews and Jewish property are too frequent expressions of ethnic and religious intolerance.

The 2000 ADL Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents noted an increase in attacks here at home, especially following the breakdown of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. The Internet also continues to be a distribution network for anti-Semitic materials.

We must be ever vigilant to expose anti-Semitism and prejudice of any kind. The Anti-Defamation League is the world's leading organization fighting anti-Semitism, racism and all forms of hatred. To find out more about ADL programs and materials, visit www.adl.org or call 1-866-STOP-HATE.

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Gravy Train

ENOUGH DEMOCRATS HAVE now signed on to a compromise tax bill in the Senate that something resembling it will likely become law. The Democrats who have joined the GOP to support the bill say it represents moderation and bipartisanship. Sadly, what it really represents is the pitiful state of what currently passes for centrism in the Democratic Party.

Listen to the arguments made by the Democrats responsible for this legislation: "Is this budget a perfect document? Of course not," insists Louisiana's John Breaux, who brokered the initial compromise. "But does it advance the cause of governing in a democracy that is almost evenly divided among the two parties? I think the answer is yes, it does." Montana's Max Baucus, who engineered the deal in the Finance Committee, puts it even more bluntly: "One is much more likely to get something accomplished being at the table than not."

The goal, you see, is to "advance the cause of governing"; to "get something accomplished." In this proceduralist moral universe, the passage of a bill is inherently superior to stalemate. Compromise is always the highest virtue. Had President Bush asked for a $10 trillion tax cut, Breaux would doubtless be congratulating himself for negotiating an $8 trillion compromise.

The Democrats who support the tax cut claim to have made it fairer and more affordable. On the first point, they have made modest progress. The Senate compromise would reduce the top income tax rate by less than Bush requested and would add benefits for low-income taxpayers who would have received nothing from Bush's plan. As a result, the highest-earning 1 percent of taxpayers wouldn't get two-fifths of the tax cut's benefits; they would get only one-third. The Democrats have made a massively regressive tax cut somewhat-less-massively regressive. That is the good news, such as it is.

The bad news is that the deal-making Democrats have not only failed to reduce the size of the tax cut; they have actually helped make it bigger. The Senate compromise is jury-rigged to make it appear to cost $1.2 trillion over ten years. But in the ten years after that, it will cost $4 trillion—as much as Bush's plan. Why? Because while the Republicans and their Democratic collaborators said they were reducing Bush's tax cut from $1.6 trillion to $1.2 trillion, neither had the political will actually to do so. In fact, after giving Bush a somewhat smaller marginal rate cut, they undid their work by adding pet projects of their own. New Jersey's Robert Torricelli, for instance, lobbied to include an expanded tuition tax deduction. Other senators threw in pension tax breaks and sundry other goodies.

Of course, that still left the problem of making the tax cut cost $1.2 trillion over ten years. One solution was the Washington art of "backloading": If you want to minimize the ten-year cost of a tax cut, you simply phase in its provisions very slowly. Bush already did this with his initial proposal, phasing in many of his cuts by 2006. The Senate indulged this hoax still further, starting many of its cuts in 2009 or later. But that still wasn't enough to squeeze in all the additional goodies. So the senators threw in another trick: "sunsetting"—opening a new tax break but giving it an expiration date of a couple of years later. Of course no one really believes the tax break will be allowed to expire. The whole point, as with backloading, is to make it appear to cost less over ten years.

There is no defensible public policy rationale for any of these gimmicks. Why should we subsidize college tuition until 2005 but not thereafter? Why should we abolish the estate tax beginning in 2011? The real rationale is that senators do not want to make the spending cuts necessary to pay for all the tax cuts. So they have put off the painful decisions for the future. Meanwhile, those hundreds of billions of dollars in hidden costs will come due just as the retirement of the baby-boom generation places enormous new strains on government resources.

It is sometimes forgotten that the last time Washington engaged in such flagrant irresponsibility—the Reagan tax cut 20 years ago—scores of Democrats acquiesced. The motive is more or less the same now. Democrats see the gravy train leaving the station, and, rather than try to stop it, some are climbing aboard. To be fair, fewer are doing so today than did in the early '80s, but their actions are also less forgivable: The fiscal consequences of such behavior are clearer now, and the public demand for it is vastly smaller. Senator Breaux says that acquiescing in this lunacy constitutes "governing." We'd call it exactly the opposite. ■

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NOTEBOOK

LOYALTY IS A ONE-WAY STREET: The last time we encountered Georgia Representative Charlie Norwood in these pages, he was being dressed down at the White House for daring to back his own patients' bill of rights legislation (see "Taking Issue," by Ryan Lizza, February 19). Norwood was planning to attend a press conference with Senators John McCain, Ted Kennedy, and John Edwards to introduce a compromise HMO reform bill they had spent months negotiating. But Bush adviser Karl Rove explained to Norwood that health care wasn't the Bush message of the week and pressured the congressman to withhold sponsorship of his own bill. Norwood dutifully complied, explaining, "I simply would like our new president to have the opportunity to provide some input on the issue." Well, this week the White House provided its input—and it's not what Norwood had hoped for. The administration's endorsement of watered-down legislation sponsored by Senators Bill Frist, John Breaux, and James Jeffords was immediately savaged by Democrats and Republicans alike. But Norwood, a former dentist, is feeling particularly betrayed. "If it is brought up in the House," he said on Tuesday, "I will personally exhaust every effort to defeat it." Asked on Wednesday whether his boss regrets caving to Rove back in February, Norwood's spokesman responds, "Not yet." Don't worry, there's still plenty of time.

DEPENDS ON WHAT THE DEFINITION OF HYPOCRITE IS: In his confirmation hearings last month to become President Bush's solicitor general, Ted Olson denied any involvement in the Arkansas Project, a Clinton-scandal-mongering operation at *The American Spectator*, on whose board Olson served. "It has been alleged that I was somehow involved in that so-called project," he declared. "I was not involved in the project in its origin or its management." Subsequently, however, David Brock, once the *Spectator*'s lead anti-Clinton writer, asserted that Olson had been deeply involved in the project, detailing several meetings in which Olson helped plot strategy. It's unclear who's telling the truth here: On the one hand, Brock is now on hostile terms with most of his old *Spectator* colleagues; on the other, Olson has been accused of giving deceptive testimony before—in 1986 an independent counsel reported that his testimony before Congress was "disingenuous and misleading." So an investigation into whether Olson lied in his confirmation hearings would seem to be in order. But Olson's conservative allies—surprise!—doggedly refuse to entertain any such idea. *The Wall Street Journal* indignantly editorialized that "there wasn't anything illegal" about the Arkansas Project. But that's beside the point. The question isn't whether the project was illegal but whether Olson lied about it. And the *Journal*, like Olson, has made it fairly clear over the past few years that it thinks it's not OK to lie under oath about legal behavior. Olson, for his part, is relying on legalisms that sound quite, well, Clintonian. He and his allies have put forth an extraordinarily technical defense that boils down to the contention that the Arkansas Project did not refer to the *Spectator*'s efforts to dig up dirt in Arkansas, as is commonly understood, but to a specific portion of that project in which Olson did not participate. This apparently satisfies Senator Orrin Hatch, the Judiciary Committee chairman, who sees no need for further investigation. In *The Washington Post* an aide quotes Hatch saying, "It comes down to what the definition of the Arkansas Project is." Where have we heard that construction before?

DEMOCRATICSEXPOLICE.COM: Speaking of post-Lewinsky changes of heart, Democrats used to spend a

RUMSFELD HAS CLAIMED SPACE FOR THE MILITARY.
NOT SO FAST.
CHENEY
WHAT ABOUT OIL DRILLING IN SPACE? HAVE WE RULED THAT OUT? YOU CAN BET THE ENVIRONMENTALISTS HAVE.
TAKE VENUS! RUNAWAY GREENHOUSE EFFECT. MUST BE LOTS OF OIL THERE! AND IT'S NOT CONTROLLED BY AMERICA'S ENEMIES.
TOLES
©2001 THE NEW REPUBLIC
IT'S NOT CONTROLLED BY US, EITHER.
NOT YET. THERE MAY BE A ROLE HERE FOR RUMMIE AFTER ALL.
DONALD, CHENEY SAYS 'TAKE VENUS!'

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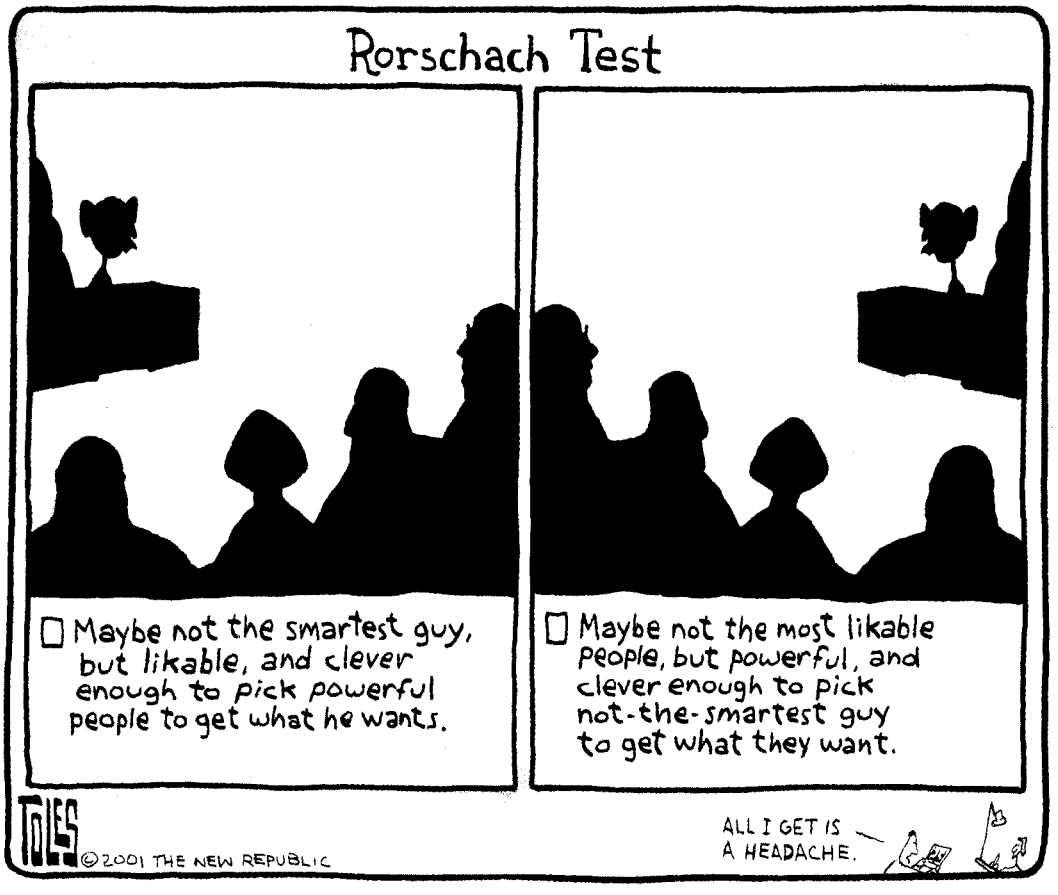
lot of time saying that affairs between consenting adults were nobody else's business. But Democrats.com, the website that first wrote about Jeb Bush's supposed dalliance with a state employee, has evidently decided that prying into politicians' sex lives isn't so bad after all. Newspapers describe the site as unaffiliated with the Democratic Party, but that doesn't absolve top Democratic strategists like Stan Greenberg, Al Gore's storied pollster, and Greg Simon, Gore's former domestic policy adviser, both listed on the website as members of the "Democrats.com Advisory Board," of responsibility. Have they forgotten that Democrats used to consider Ken Starr and Co. a threat to American civilization? In fact, as recently as last August a Democratic consultant named Bob Fertik said, "It's been nearly two years since Ken Starr committed one of the worst violations of personal privacy in American history in his efforts to destroy President Clinton." Who is Fertik? The co-founder of Democrats.com and author of the website's article on Jeb Bush.

BULLY THY NEIGHBOR: In recent years, anti-gay activists have gone to considerable lengths to prove that their efforts are born of love, not prejudice. Groups championing gay conversion have launched "Truth in Love" ad campaigns in print and on television; Focus on the Family even titles its conferences on the subject "Love Won Out." Well, apparently that love is about to get tougher, at least in Washington state. There, social conservatives have apparently concluded that their gay-conversion efforts should not be limited to parents and ministers but should also enlist the aid of . . . high school bullies. A statewide anti-bullying statute has been shelved due to opposition by Christian conservatives who consider it a gay rights measure. As an editorial by the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* described the situation, "Apparently the concern on the far right is that upstanding, God-fearing bullies would be deprived of the right to harass, berate, and intimidate kids they single out as sexually different." This magazine has expressed its own reservations about the anti-bullying movement (see "Bully Pulpit," by Benjamin Soskis, May 14). But, to our minds, cutting down on the harassment of gay students is an argument *for* these measures—not against them.

SPEED KILLS: Republicans say the American public is behind them on the tax cut. But if so, why are they bypassing usual congressional procedures to rush it through at breakneck speed? The House and Senate approved budget resolutions in April before seeing a single detail of the president's proposed spending levels. The Senate Budget Committee never bothered to produce its own spending document. Now the House and Senate are preparing to institute a decade of tax cuts *before* learning how many tens of billions of dollars in new Pentagon spending Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld will seek once he has completed his review of the U.S. military. GOP leaders initially set a July 4 deadline for sending a tax bill to the president, but now they aim to finish their work by Memorial Day. Is it Strom? Fear of amended surplus estimates? Or do they just fear that, given time, the public will start to do the math?


Rorschach Test
☐ Maybe not the smartest guy, but likable, and clever enough to pick powerful people to get what he wants.
☐ Maybe not the most likable people, but powerful, and clever enough to pick not-the-smartest guy to get what they want.
TOLES
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ALL I GET IS A HEADACHE.

HE DIDN'T SLEEP WITH HER EITHER: "In a May 15 article about Florida Gov. Jeb Bush's denial of rumors of an extramarital affair with a state official, a photo caption incorrectly identified the woman standing behind Bush at a news conference as Cynthia Henderson, the state official mentioned in the rumors. [She is] Donna Poole, chairwoman of the Florida Public Employees Relations Committee." —*The Washington Post*, May 16 ■

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Liberal multiculturalism comes home to roost.

No Appeal

By Peter Beinart

Last week President Bush outmaneuvered congressional Democrats yet again, this time on judicial appointments. After threatening for weeks to fight the administration's first round of nominees to the federal bench, Democrats found that the eleven names the White House put forward offered few easy targets. So, instead of denouncing them, Senate Democrats declared victory. "I'm pleased that the White House has chosen to work with us on the first group of nominations," said Minority Leader Tom Daschle. "Had I not been encouraged," explained Patrick Leahy, the Judiciary Committee's ranking Democrat, in explaining why he attended Bush's announcement ceremony, "I would not have been here today."

With all due respect, I think Daschle and Leahy have been reading too many of their own press releases. Bush's overwhelmingly conservative batch of nominees represents about as much of a Democratic win as does Bush's $1.35 trillion tax cut "compromise"—which is to say, it represents another Democratic loss. What's more, the nominees offer yet more evidence that Democrats haven't learned how to respond to the GOP's new politics of diversity. They had better figure it out soon.

Bush used three techniques to catch the Democrats flat-footed. First, although early leaks suggested he would nominate as many as 40 judges, he announced only eleven. While this might seem like a concession, it's not much of one: Having used this batch of judges to blunt initial Democratic opposition, the White House is almost certain to quickly nominate many more. Second, Bush didn't appoint hard-line conservatives from states with two Democratic senators, like California, Maryland, and New York. That's a concession—but only to reality, given that, even under a "blue slip" policy altered to smooth Bush's nominations, it's still almost impossible procedurally to confirm a judge when both a state's senators object. Third, and by far the most important, Bush's appointments were demographically diverse. Three of his eleven nominees were ethnic minorities; another three were women. The press and Senate Democrats were impressed. A *New York Times* editorial called the selections surprisingly "eclectic and conciliatory"; the only nominee to whom Democrats immediately objected was Terrence Boyle, a white Jesse Helms protégé from North Carolina.

It was a dazzling example of how to use liberals' identity politics against them. With the exception of two renominated Clinton appointees, the White House nominees aren't "eclectic and conciliatory" at all—they're just ethnically diverse. All are reliable right-wingers, hatched from the tight-knit conservative legal network that gave us Antonin Scalia, Clarence Thomas, and Robert Bork. There's little doubt how they'd rule on free speech or the death penalty or, for that matter, how they'd have ruled in *Bush* v. *Gore*. But liberals can't easily admit that ideological diversity is more important than ethnic diversity, because for years they've been arguing the opposite—saying that what matters in university hiring, for instance, is a faculty that "looks like America," regardless of how uniformly it thinks. Now the Bush administration has taken that specious logic and driven a truck through it—nominating female and nonwhite conservatives, first to the Cabinet and now to the bench. And liberals, prisoners of their own racial and gender essentialism, figure that this means they must be winning, that this diversity somehow represents ideological moderation. So the *Times* calls Bush's picks "conciliatory." And the big problem North Carolina Senator John Edwards has with the nominations is that they aren't ethnically diverse *enough*—instead of Boyle, Bush's North Carolina pick should have been an African American. Presumably, if Bush gins up a black North Carolina conservative, Edwards will be satisfied.

I have a suggestion for Senate Democrats and their liberal activist allies: Forget Boyle. He's not your real problem. The fight over Bush's federal court nominees is about establishing parameters for Bush's Supreme Court picks. And knocking off Boyle doesn't set a meaningful precedent for that fight, because when a Supreme Court seat opens up, Bush won't appoint someone like him. The days of Republican presidents naming white, male, right-wing Supreme Court nominees are probably over. Just as the conservative movement realized years ago that its anti-feminist spokespeople had to be women, the Bush administration has realized that its right-wing judges had better be minorities or female. In fact, the more ideologically vulnerable a Republican judge is, the more necessary it is that she not be a white male.

Which is why the Democrats should go after a different Bush federal court nominee: Miguel Estrada. Estrada is a 39-year-old Honduran immigrant and rising right-wing star; his life story makes liberals swoon, but his politics makes them shudder. Going after Estrada would send the one message that really matters: that when the White House makes its Supreme Court picks, it must compromise ideologically, not demographically. Bush's judge pickers will almost certainly want a right-winger on the High Court, and they will bank, as they have this week, on liberals' reluctance to oppose anything that makes the Court more diverse. They will hope liberals do what many did during the Clarence Thomas nomination—which was to suggest, against all evidence, that because Thomas is black, he couldn't be a real conservative. But if the Bushies decide their diversity games won't work, they may be forced to choose an ideological moderate, like Sandra Day O'Connor, or someone whose ideology is unknown, which is how we got the blessed David Souter.

Right now, the White House seems to think that identity

TNR editor Peter Beinart's weekly column, "Punditry," can be read in The New Republic Online (*www.thenewrepublic.com*).

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Putin Shows His True Colors

Michael McFaul is the Peter and Helen Bing Research Fellow at the oover Institution and an assistant professor of political science at Stanford University.

A year ago, many were asking, Who is Vladimir Putin? A valid question in that this junior-level KGB officer had risen to become prime minister and then president of Russia with amazing speed. After being elected as Russia's second post-Soviet president, Putin said all the right things about markets and democracy. For those who had worked to overthrow Soviet communism, the coming to power of a KGB officer in postcommunist Russia could only be seen as tragic. Nonetheless, this new, young, and energetic leader inspired hope with his statements about a new beginning for Russia.

The verdict may still be out regarding Putin's commitment to market reforms, but today there is no doubt about his antidemocratic proclivities. More than any event in the Putin era, the recent closing of NTV—Russia's only independent national television network—demonstrates unequivocally that **Putin seeks to destroy Russia's already fragile and weak democratic institutions.**

Putin did not personally order the seizure of NTV. Instead, Gazprom—the largely state-owned gas company—exercised its so-called property rights as a major shareholder in NTV to fire the management and leading journalists from the popular television network. Gazprom did the same to shut down *Segodnya,* a popular daily newspaper, and *Itogi,* a weekly magazine. In one week, three media outlets critical of the president were muzzled.

NTV had serious financial problems, but the management was working to resolve its financial woes by securing new investment from Ted Turner. Putin's government blocked the deal. And if Gazprom was only worried about its investments in NTV, then why destroy the value of the company by firing the most popular journalists? The firing of *Itogi*'s staff was even more overtly political since this magazine was actually turning a profit, a rare achievement for a weekly in any country.

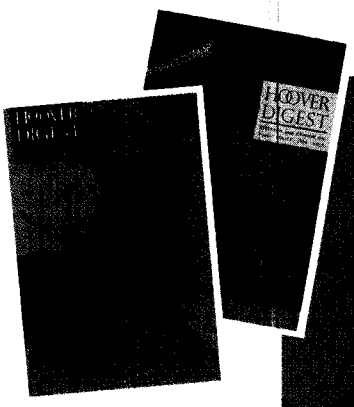
Putin apologists claim that he played no role in this "merger and acquisition." And that's the point; if he really cared about freedom of the press, he could have stopped this gross violation of democracy with one public statement. His inaction reveals his true preferences about a free and independent media. Journalists can be free and independent just as long as they do not criticize the president.

The seizure of NTV and the closure of *Segodnya* and *Itogi* constitute one of the greatest setbacks to Russian democracy in the last ten years. Competitive elections cannot occur without a free press. Corruption cannot be fought without a free press. Elected government officials cannot be held accountable without a free press. And, ultimately, Russia cannot become a normal European country without a free press.

Putin continues to believe that these developments at home do not affect his foreign policy mission abroad. He has stated numerous times that he wants to see Russia become a full member of Western institutions, such as the European Union and the G-8. Western leaders need to make it clear that the EU and the G-8 do not accept applications from dictatorships. The sooner Putin realizes the costs of brutish activity at home for his agenda abroad, the better.

— Michael McFaul

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University



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politics are the only politics Democrats really care about—that they either believe demographic diversity is more important than ideological diversity or that demographic diversity inevitably produces ideological diversity. Those ideas aren't just wrong; they've undermined liberalism politically and morally for decades. Bush's judicial picks, therefore, offer a welcome test. By keeping the Supreme Court from swinging right, liberals can simultaneously show that America has a left worthy of genuine pride. ■

Larry Klayman, the GOP, and "blowback."

Friendly Fire

By JASON ZENGERLE

THIS WEEK, LARRY KLAYMAN wasn't in Washington, the city where he made a name for himself and his conservative legal watchdog group by filing scores of lawsuits against the Clinton administration. Instead, the Judicial Watch chairman was catching rays on the deck of the MS *Masdaam* as she toured the Caribbean. On the trip, billed as the "Cruise to Clean Up Corruption," Klayman, along with special guests like Gennifer Flowers and Donato Dalrymple, regaled about 30 Judicial Watch supporters—who paid between $2,000 and $5,000 apiece for the ride—with tales of Clinton administration corruption. Before embarking on his cruise, which included a port of call at Grand Cayman, the Judicial Watch chairman had predicted, "By the time we're done, we will have renamed this tropical island the 'Grand Klayman Island.'"

A growing number of Republicans would be happy if Klayman stayed on his island. That's because ever since Bill Clinton left the White House, Klayman has been turning his fire on the GOP. In recent months, Judicial Watch has lambasted President Bush and other "gutless Republicans" for not carrying on the Clinton inquisition. The group has launched an investigation into the circumstances surrounding China's return of the American spy plane's crew to "find out if any secret promises were made to the 'Butchers of Beijing' behind closed doors." And, most ominously, Judicial Watch has initiated legal action against House Majority Whip Tom DeLay and the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC) for their fund-raising practices. "It can now be understood why the Republicans and the Bush administration have used the mantra 'Move on,'" Klayman declared at an April press conference. "But, ironically, we'll move on—we'll move on to the illegal activities of the Republican Party ... and Tom DeLay."

The standard view of Klayman's recent strafing of his fellow conservatives is that it represents a cynical, calculated bid to stay relevant. Klayman has realized, the theory goes, that without Clinton to kick around anymore, he needs a new high-profile target to keep himself in the news and the donations pouring in. But there's a problem with this view: It assumes Klayman is acting rationally. When he says Ron Brown did not die in a plane crash but was murdered because he was about to air the Clintons' dirty laundry ("[T]hey found a bullet hole in Ron Brown's head"), he's not doing it for effect; he really believes it. Klayman's rantings aren't careerist or partisan; they stem from an overwhelming urge to believe the worst about those in power. And, unfortunately for Republicans, that now means them.

THERE'S NO ARGUING with the fact that Klayman built himself on the back of Bill Clinton. Before founding Judicial Watch in 1994, Klayman was an obscure trade lawyer. But thanks to the Clinton scandals, he became a fixture on talk shows like "Crossfire" and "Rivera Live," and his exposure turned Judicial Watch into a cash cow. In 1996 the group took in a mere $67,620 in donations; two years later its annual haul had shot up to $12.4 million and, two years after that, to $17.6 million—most from direct-mail donations and grants from Clinton haters like Richard Mellon Scaife.

But while the end of the Clinton presidency represents a blow to business for Klayman, it isn't necessarily crippling. After all, with Hillary Clinton in the Senate and Terry McAuliffe at the Democratic National Committee, there are still plenty of Clinton-related scandals for Klayman to monger—and lots of lingering anti-Clinton sentiment to mine for contributions. Indeed, Judicial Watch has already filed complaints with the Senate Ethics Committee and the Federal Election Commission against Hillary Clinton over her role in Pardongate. And the group still has about 80 cases ("I don't count on a daily basis," Klayman says) pending against Bill Clinton. Just last week Klayman deposed Doris Matsui, the wife of California Representative Bob Matsui and former Clinton White House deputy liaison, as part of his ongoing Chinagate litigation.

But Klayman's outrage has spread way beyond the Clintons. Judicial Watch now has branch offices in Dallas, Houston, Miami, and San Marino, California, and is delving into state and local matters. Klayman even has global ambitions: He hopes to open a European office in the future. (Closer to home, Judicial Watch is currently representing Paul Weyrich in a defamation suit against THE NEW REPUBLIC.) The group inserted itself into the Florida recount, inspecting ballots in six counties; in California, it recently sued Governor Gray Davis for access to documents that, the group alleges, show Davis and other pols have taken "political payoffs" from utility companies; and last month in Texas Ross Perot's former right-hand man Russ Verney left his Reform Party post to head Judicial Watch's new Southwest regional office. "We're becoming the ACLU of government corruption," Klayman crows.

And Klayman sees government corruption everywhere, as his complaint against DeLay and the NRCC makes clear. On behalf of the NRCC, DeLay invited small-business owners to Washington earlier this month to take part in something called the Business Advisory Council, made up of small-business owners who give money to the NRCC. "As an hon-

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orary member [of the council]," DeLay said in a recorded telephone solicitation, "you will be invited to meetings with top Bush administration officials, where your opinions on issues like tax reform will be heard." DeLay's solicitation was no different from thousands of other fund-raising schemes. While carefully avoiding an explicit quid pro quo, he promised access to those who gave money. That's how fund-raising works. But, according to Klayman, this run-of-the-mill solicitation runs afoul of federal anti-bribery statutes, federal election law, and House ethics rules. By Klayman's logic, then, practically all political fund-raising is illegal.

GIVEN THAT VIEW, it's no surprise Judicial Watch is going after Republicans on other fund-raising fronts. The group hounded House Speaker Dennis Hastert for his involvement in the NRCC fund-raising event—he was a scheduled participant, and a fax promoting the event had been sent out under his name—so ferociously that he ended up skipping it altogether. Judicial Watch has threatened to sue the National Republican Senatorial Committee for setting up similar meetings between donors and Bush administration officials. It recently initiated litigation over the Bush administration's awarding of diplomatic posts to campaign contributors. It's investigating the possibility that Trent Lott is using the Trent Lott Leadership Institute at the University of Mississippi as a conduit for political contributions. It's looking into a *New York Times* report that Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson met with political donors in his government office. Judicial Watch is even dredging up a decade-old charge that Dick Cheney, as secretary of defense in the first Bush administration, held fund-raisers at the Pentagon. "The Pentagon claims they have no records," huffs Klayman, "so we brought a lawsuit."

Naturally, all this isn't sitting so well with some of Klayman's old supporters. Although Judicial Watch has occasionally gone after Republicans in the past—it once called on Newt Gingrich to resign, and it has lobbed criticisms at Rudy Giuliani and Orrin Hatch—the group's bread and butter was always Clinton, and, now that it isn't, some in the GOP are worried. According to a recent report in *Roll Call*, congressional Republicans are pressuring one long-standing Klayman ally, Georgia Representative Bob Barr, who has publicly promoted Judicial Watch (and who is being represented by the group in a violation-of-privacy suit against Clinton), to end the association. And David Keene, chairman of the American Conservative Union, recently penned an op-ed in *The Hill* castigating Klayman for behaving more as "a super litigious Common Cause type than as a conservative" and raising the question of "whether he can get conservatives or others to write checks to his operation while he attacks DeLay rather than Clinton." (Klayman calls the article "defamatory" and, according to Keene, has made noises about suing.) "The people who gave money to Judicial Watch gave money because it was a way to go after Bill Clinton," Keene elaborated to me. "They weren't interested in creating another good-government, Common Cause-type group."

But that, in a loonier version, is what they've gotten. While Klayman's bipartisan scandal-mongering may eventually hurt his bottom line, for the time being he has enough money to wreak some serious havoc. In this sense, his recent turn against the GOP is a political form of blowback. Much as the CIA suppressed its qualms about arming Islamic radicals to drive the Soviets out of Afghanistan, Republicans ignored their doubts about funding a serial suer like Klayman, so long as he was suing Clinton. But, just as some of those Islamic radicals now visit their terror upon the United States, Klayman, with Clinton gone, has trained his sights on the GOP. For years, Klayman has insisted that "Judicial Watch is nonpartisan." Who knew he meant it? ■

Moscow Dispatch

Starstruck

By PETER BAKER

THE MAY PARADES on Red Square aren't what they used to be. Gone are the veterans of the "Great Patriotic War" who defeated Nazi Germany 56 years ago; this year, for the first time, the hardy survivors watched from the guest area while fresh-faced recruits marched in front of the Kremlin wall. Gone too is all the hardware, the tanks and missiles that seemed so imposing during the cold war.

The rhetoric isn't as imposing either. Sure, Russian President Vladimir Putin made a veiled jab at the United States during this month's Victory Day celebration. "One cannot build a safe world only for oneself and, moreover, at the expense of others," he declared in a dig at George W. Bush's beloved missile defense program. But, like the parade, the rhetoric seems mostly for show.

Indeed, while opponents of missile defense in the United States fret about its apocalyptic effect on Russian-American relations, the Russians themselves have made peace with its inevitability. Four months into Bush's tenure, Putin has evidently decided that nothing he says or does will dissuade George W. Bush from building (or attempting to build) a nuclear shield. And so the Russian leader is looking for a deal.

Take Bush's May 2 speech on missile defense. In Washington it was seen as a warning that the administration was ready to dump the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty of 1972 and risk a new arms race in order to build an updated version of Ronald Reagan's Star Wars. But in Moscow political leaders and analysts heard a different message, one apparently calibrated for their ears. They were pleased that Bush referred to Russia as a potentially "great nation"—flattery that played to their wounded pride. They were pleased that Bush did not use the word "national" to describe missile defense, leaving open the possibility of a joint effort. And, most of all, they were pleased that Bush promised to consult with Russia before moving forward.

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Within ten days, senior Bush aides were at the Kremlin to talk, and Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov was headed to Washington to sit down with U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell. In the works is a June summit between Bush and Putin in Europe. Missile defense puts Russia back where it wants to be: at the table. For most of the last decade, Russia has been in the position of a supplicant, begging for loans from the International Monetary Fund or complaining impotently as NATO expanded into Eastern Europe and bombed Belgrade. But in the nuclear arena Russia still matches the United States as no other nation in the world can. And so, for the first time since the fall of the Soviet Union, Moscow feels it has an issue on which it can deal with Washington on more or less equal terms.

This parity, of course, is an illusion. Russia may have nearly as many nuclear warheads as the United States, but it lacks the resources to keep them in silos much longer—much less the capacity to compete in a race to develop anti-missile systems. But this reality, too, favors a conciliatory approach to missile defense: Putin needs a deal so he can dismantle his aging nuclear arsenal without losing face. He has proposed that each side scale down to 1,500 warheads, a notion that seems to hold some appeal for Bush, and Kremlin advisers suggest Russia may need to go even lower, say, to 550. Indeed, a new consensus is emerging among Moscow's foreign policy elite that Russia should tie its inevitable warhead cuts into a grand bargain for a missile defense program that probably can't be stopped anyway. "I don't think Russia or anyone else should support the breakdown of the ABM treaty," says Sergei Karaganov, head of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy. "But, if America decides to do it, let them take the heat."

And there's one more reason for Putin to seek common ground with the Bush administration on missile defense—business for Russian military contractors. Just as the U.S. defense industry has much to gain from the tens of billions of dollars to be spent developing a web of anti-missile launchers, Russia's struggling arms factories are eager to snap up any scraps that might get thrown their way. Putin's February proposal that Russia help NATO build a limited European anti-missile system was an initial bid to get in on the bonanza. The written plan Putin gave NATO suggested using Moscow's existing tactical missile defenses as the basis for further development of a broader system that could be tested at Russian facilities.

Whether for economic or political reasons, therefore, the notion of a joint missile defense effort has gained currency in Russia. While bellicose hard-liners still warn of the dire consequences that will ensue if the United States pursues a missile defense system, the more influential pragmatists see an opportunity once again to share center stage with the world's only superpower. "If they build it alone and without us, that would be bad," says Vladimir Lukin, a former ambassador to the United States. "If they build it together with Europe, us, and China, this would not be bad at all, as long as we agree on common parameters." But, of course, alone is exactly how most people in Washington plan to build it. Having convinced Moscow not to simply say no to missile defense, the new challenge for the Bush administration may be how to deal with a Russian government that says yes. ■

Jerusalem Dispatch

Bank Shot

By YOSSI KLEIN HALEVI

THE ISRAELI LEFT, reduced to its hardest core by Yasir Arafat's terror tantrum and Shimon Peres's alliance with Ariel Sharon, is desperate. Since the outbreak of violence last fall, the peace camp has barely managed a single respectable demonstration. But Peace Now and its allies now believe they've found the issue that will restore them to the Israeli mainstream: a settlement freeze in exchange for a Palestinian freeze on violence. That's the compromise proposed by the Egyptian and Jordanian governments and by the Mitchell Commission, and polls show that a majority of Israelis support it. It's Sharon's weakest point, and the left will try to dent his popularity—and perhaps even force Labor to quit his unity government—by pushing the issue.

The left's campaign has been given a boost by the government's supposed new settlement drive. First, it approved a major allocation for the settlements—about $350 million according to a banner headline in the newspaper *Ha'aretz*, considerably less according to government spokespeople. That coincided with Housing Minister Natan Sharansky's approval for private construction of 700 housing units in two West Bank towns, raising left-wing fears that more are to come.

But the notion that Sharon has embarked on a new settlement drive is a fantasy. The new money isn't intended for building but for the settlers' security needs, like armored buses. The allocation will also cover increased tax breaks for settlers, a move that is unlikely to entice large numbers to territories that have become a battlefield. After the *Ha'aretz* report, Sharon phoned a half-dozen key members of Congress and explained that he had no intention of launching a massive settlement project. Nor is there much pressure on him from settlers to do so. Construction, admits a spokesperson for the Yesha Council, the settlers' lobbying group, "isn't at the top of our agenda at the moment. Our priority is ending the terrorism. Not many people will move their families into a war zone."

The numbers bear this out. In the first three months of the new intifada, a mere 350 Israeli families moved to the territories. And with the army's recent assessment that fighting could continue for the next three years, more Jews are likely to leave the West Bank than move there. Of the 6,000 housing starts in the territories left over from previous governments, most remain unsold. Many projects have been abandoned mid-construction.

And the intifada isn't the only factor preventing new settlements; Sharon's Labor Party partners are as well. Massive building would endanger the unity government, which both Sharon and Sharansky consider essential. Sharansky has pledged to "build within the limits of national consensus." And the 700 new housing units illustrate the point. The two towns where the building is concentrated—Maale Adumim,

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near Jerusalem, and Alfei Menashe, near Tel Aviv—were included as part of Israeli settlement blocs in President Clinton's final status map at the Camp David talks last summer. According to Ehud Barak's chief negotiator, Gilead Sher, the Palestinians accepted the blocs concept at Camp David and again at the Taba talks in January. Indeed, about 80 percent of the building begun by the Barak government is taking place in the West Bank's large Jewish towns, which any final agreement would leave in Israeli hands.

Even former Middle East peace negotiator Dennis Ross, who calls the settlements a psychological provocation that reinforces Palestinians' sense of powerlessness, acknowledges that some construction should now be considered legitimate. "The Palestinians accepted three settlement-bloc areas," he told THE NEW REPUBLIC. "If one were building within, and not outward, it would be very hard to argue against the legitimacy [of that act]. It's within the context of what everyone knows will be part of a [peace] settlement."

So far, Sharansky's moves meet Ross's criterion. The housing minister decided, for example, not to implement an additional building project in Maale Adumim previously approved by the Barak government because, he explains, "it looks from the air like an extension of the city's borders, even though it is part of the municipal boundaries." But he won't present his cautious approach as a concession to Arafat. "If you [Americans] present it that way," he recently told U.S. Deputy National Security Adviser Steve Hadley in Washington, "I'll start building." He explains, "I'm making concessions for national unity, not for Arafat. That will only reward him for terrorism."

And that's precisely why Sharon won't accept a settlement freeze. "Sharon's main mission is to cut the knot between Palestinian violence and the peace process," says Sharon insider Dore Gold, who heads the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs. "Linking settlements to terrorism will only convince the Palestinians that the Hezbollah model works. It will guarantee violence the next time we reach a negotiating impasse." For Sharon, the question is essentially symbolic: Any concession on settlements while the violence rages undermines his long-term strategy.

The Israeli left, of course, says the settlements are part of what's encouraging the violence in the first place. But Sher disagrees. "The reason for the failure of Camp David and Taba had nothing to do with settlements," he says. "If I had to scale it, settlements weren't among the five major divergences between Israelis and Palestinians." If Peace Now has its way, however, they'll once again be a major divergence between Israelis and Israelis. ■

How Bill Kristol ditched conservatism.

Great Escape

By FRANKLIN FOER

BACK IN THE winter of 1995, Bill Kristol liked to fantasize aloud about "President Newt Gingrich." Once, after the House speaker addressed a group of Republican governors, Kristol gushed to *The Washington Times*, "How can anyone hear the speech he gave today and not want to see him run?" For Kristol, who was editing the newly launched *Weekly Standard*, Gingrich—energetic and idealistic, smart and strident—embodied all that was good about modern conservatism. By the fall of 1997, however, disillusionment had set in. Kristol's litany of gripes with Gingrich seemed unending: His foreign policy was flaccid and corporate; he prosecuted the culture war without vigor; his hostility to government bled into anti-Americanism. Along with his *Standard* colleague David Brooks, Kristol set out to knock the intellectual underpinnings from beneath Gingrichism. "Wishing to be left alone isn't a governing doctrine," they wrote on the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page. "And an American political movement's highest goal can't be protecting citizens from their own government."

A manifesto accompanied their critique. In place of the GOP's libertarianism, they proposed "national-greatness conservatism." They spoke of returning the Republican Party to the activist ways of Theodore Roosevelt, even borrowing his rhetoric. "[B]ust the great public trusts of our time—the education, health and Social Security monopolies," they shouted. But while the rhetoric was new, the substance wasn't. Yes, Kristol and Brooks wanted an activist federal government, but only so it could dismantle itself, which was exactly what libertarians had been demanding all along.

But Kristol and Brooks have come a long way in the past three years. These days they champion campaign finance reform and environmental protection. They oppose the Bush administration's proposed repeal of the estate tax because, as Brooks puts it, "We should be concerned with the widening income gap." They attack corporate power with Naderesque ferocity. No one can accuse them of being mere libertarians in Bull Moose garb anymore. National-greatness conservatism, to the surprise of many, has come to mean something. It's a real ideology now. It's just not a conservative one.

In the universe of Newt Gingrich, a special place was reserved for the intellectual guru. And, for a time in the early '90s, the man who occupied it was Bill Kristol. From his personal think tank, the Project for the Republican Future, Kristol whispered in the ear of the aspiring House speaker. Stumping for the Contract With America, Gingrich came to

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parrot Kristol's lines about the hollowness of the liberal welfare state. And one of Kristol's many memos formed the basis of Gingrich's strategy of "principled obstructionism" against Hillarycare.

As long as Gingrich played the part of anti-establishment insurgent, Kristol venerated him. In 1995, the debut cover of Kristol's *Standard* portrayed Gingrich as Rambo, bravely swinging on a vine above a burning Capitol. But once Gingrich was entrenched as speaker, Kristol began to express reservations. "Gingrich seems determined to move at a snail's pace," Kristol editorialized in a fit of frustration. On affirmative action and vouchers, Gingrich was insufficiently vocal; on defense spending, he asked for barely a pittance. Most disappointingly, Gingrich had begun extolling the virtues of engagement with China. "[T]he Republican establishment has joined the Clinton administration in subordinating both strategic concerns and American principles to business interests," Kristol lamented in early 1997. Nor was China an isolated case. Where Kristol and his neocon comrades called for aggressive, moralistic interventions around the world, Gingrich and his congressional cronies treated foreign policy as an extension of their libertarianism: Here, too, they let U.S. business set policy. The scuffle over China sowed the seeds of Kristol's growing suspicion of corporate influence over the Republican Party and of the libertarian ideology that rationalized it. Marshall Wittmann, a key Kristol ally now at the Hudson Institute, explains: "When Republicans took control of Congress and pursued a foreign policy more interested in promoting the dollar than democracy, we became concerned about the corporate corruption of the movement." And the movement became concerned about them. In April 1997 Gingrich phoned Rush Limbaugh's radio show and lambasted his old friend: "I've concluded that [Kristol] thinks he has to make news by pandering to the liberals every week and has become sort of the most destructive element on the right."

Alienated from the GOP leadership—and convinced by the 1996 elections that its libertarian politics couldn't win—Kristol and Brooks unveiled national-greatness conservatism. There was only one problem: No one, perhaps not even Kristol and Brooks, had a clear idea of what the phrase meant. In the *Standard*, Kristol urged Gingrich to be more stridently conservative. In their manifesto, they urged Republicans to jettison their strident anti-government rhetoric. The incoherence was painfully evident. When Brooks and Kristol tried to devise policies for their brand of activist governance, they either ended up reciting conservative boilerplate about privatizing Social Security and education or suggested quirky, symbolic causes like revamping the space program and building ornate public libraries.

NATIONAL-GREATNESS CONSERVATISM probably wouldn't have amounted to much more than that, had it not been for the presidential candidacy of John McCain. When Wittmann first supplied the straight-talking senator with Brooks's essays on the topic in the spring of 1998, McCain's campaign was in desperate need of a rationale. It had a candidate with a compelling biography but no clear agenda. So McCain took the themes of national-greatness conservatism—Teddy Roosevelt-style reform, nationalist revivalism—and made them his own. Even his campaign slogan, "the new patriotic challenge," was an explicit nod in Kristol and Brooks's direction. As McCain aide John Weaver acknowledges, Wittmann and Kristol were "the home breeding ground for the legislative and strategic concepts that ultimately emanate from McCain."

It's easy to understand why McCain's fledgling campaign bought into the national-greatness conservatism concept—he needed ideas that would separate him from the Republican pack. Why Kristol and Brooks chose the Arizona senator as their vehicle is more complicated. After all, George W. Bush's speeches also borrowed unabashedly from their criticisms of "leave us alone" conservatism. W.'s foreign policy slogan, "a distinctly American internationalism," repudiated the isolationism of the House Republicans. And one would have expected McCain's casual indifference on abortion and homosexuality to infuriate genuine social conservatives such as Kristol and Wittmann.

THERE WAS, HOWEVER, a significant obstacle to a Bush-Kristol alliance. The political tradition from which Kristol and Brooks hailed was neoconservatism, a movement with urban, Jewish, Northeastern, highbrow roots. The Texas governor, with his Southern pedigree, evangelical flourishes, and anti-intellectual tendencies, represented something very different. As Brooks puts it: "We're separated from him by culture."

Under Ronald Reagan and Gingrich, those differences had been papered over. The neocons had praised evangelicals for remoralizing American life, even overlooking the occasional anti-Semitic slur from their friends. (After Pat Robertson published his ravings in 1991 about the "cosmopolitan, liberal, secular Jews" who "undermine the public strength of Christianity," for example, the Podhoretzes and Kristols sprang to his defense.) But by the 2000 campaign, many of the Jewish neocons had decisively fallen out with the Christian theocons. The breaking point came in 1996 with a symposium, sponsored by the journal *First Things*, titled "End of Democracy?" and featuring such social conservative stars as Charles Colson, Robert Bork, and Robert P. George. Unable to make headway against legalized abortion, the religious intellectuals lashed out in frustration. The government's immorality, they warned, justified civil disobedience and even revolution. This rhetoric transgressed too many of the neocons' first principles—patriotism, the rule of law, and the basic religious pluralism of the American state. Neocons accused the religious conservatives of anti-Americanism and broke ranks.

So, even though Kristol remained committed to banning abortion, he jumped on the McCain campaign as an opportunity to purge, in his and Brooks's words, the "self-caricaturing leaders of the right." It was more than just an occasion to toss the yokels overboard; McCain presented the neocons with an opportunity to shape the conservative movement in the fashion their intellectual forefather Leo Strauss had imagined. Gone would be Robertson's sectarian Christian politics. In its place, McCain would install Strauss's

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ROB BARBONI

preferred antidote to relativism—the secular religion of the state. In March 2000, soon after McCain called Robertson and Jerry Falwell "forces of evil," Brooks and Kristol wrote that "McCain would redirect a religiously based moral conservatism into a patriotically grounded moral appeal. When McCain talks about remoralizing America, he talks in terms of reinvigorating patriotism."

As important as Kristol's cultural affinity for McCain was his temperamental affinity for the senator's rebellious style. Kristol, too, had made a career of shaking his fist at the GOP establishment. In the early '90s he had backed Spencer Abraham's renegade campaign to become chairman of the Republican National Committee. In 1993 he started the Project for the Republican Future with the purpose of goading the party leadership rightward. In 1996, even after Bob Dole's nomination seemed inevitable, Kristol continued to flirt with every other imaginable Republican candidate. He laid bare his guiding philosophy in the *Standard* in 1997: "What's needed is an insurrection—one, two, many insurrections—from within the ranks of the GOP."

Signing up for McCain's insurrection, however, had unanticipated ideological side effects. From the start, Kristol and Brooks realized they would have to embrace campaign finance reform—despite the fact that a 1999 *Standard* editorial had pronounced the House's version of the McCain-Feingold legislation "a piece of shameless zealotry." But they could hardly have guessed how far left McCain would drift. In the heat of an insurgency, his hostility to the GOP establishment steadily deepening, McCain began jettisoning the conservative movement's core economic agenda. After a career of supporting tax cuts, McCain attacked the Bush economic plan's bias toward the wealthy. Although he had routinely voted down HMO reform, he became a proponent of the patients' bill of rights. Over and over, he slammed Bush for failing to set aside money for Social Security.

But the Kristolites didn't distance themselves from McCain's transgressions. Indeed, the Bush campaign's bare-knuckle response to McCain's challenge only bonded his supporters more strongly to his renegade campaign. In the primaries, conservatives whispered that the Bushies were enlisting the *Standard*'s advertisers to apply pressure to Kristol and Brooks. Kristol says he never experienced any strong-arming. But the rumors grew so intense that, according to one eyewitness, McCain confronted *Standard* owner Rupert Murdoch at a Los Angeles fund-raiser and pressed him to guarantee the health of the magazine. For Wittmann, who'd become a McCain supporter in 1998, the threats were more than rumors. After years of loyal service to the conservative cause as a lobbyist for the Christian Coalition and the Heritage Foundation, Wittmann's support for McCain transformed him into a pariah. His colleagues at Heritage warned him that his support for McCain would jeopardize his career. His superiors forbade him to identify himself as a Heritage employee in conversations with reporters. Life at Heritage became so uncomfortable that Wittmann left.

Nor did the recriminations end when the campaign did. Since the election, Kristol has been publicly badmouthed by everyone from Paul Weyrich to Dick Cheney. Tim Goeglein, one of Bush adviser Karl Rove's hirelings, has complained to Wittmann's new patrons at the Hudson Institute about his criticism of the administration. Ultra-activist Grover Norquist has been even blunter, telling one of his fellow conservatives that Wittmann was no longer welcome in the movement. And as far as Kristol is concerned, the feeling is mutual. "Why are conservatives so upset? It isn't that we supported McCain; it's that we haven't apologized for supporting him," he told me. "There's something sick about a movement like that."

Kristol, Brooks, and Wittmann, having joined the McCain crusade as nettlesome members of the conservative movement, ended it cast out of the movement altogether. And ideology has followed sociology—with the national-greatness conservatives willing to entertain ever more radical heresies against conservative orthodoxy. As followers of Strauss, neocons had always held that public virtue—not economic efficiency or individual freedom—was the measure of a good society. Their journals, *Public Interest* and *Commentary*,

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never objected to the welfare state per se—only the efficacy of specific policies. During the cold war, neocons joined the anti-government crusade because it gave them allies against communism abroad and against relativism at home. But, with their bonds to the conservative movement loosened, Kristol and his allies have begun to drop the strategic anti-statism of their neocon ancestors and are beginning to develop an economics that doesn't worship at the altar of unregulated free markets.

It's not just the accusation, hurled in *Standard* editorials, that Bush was "groveling" to China on behalf of American business. As Wittmann has written on his website, *conservativereform.org*, "[C]onservatism need not be defined by K Street. As we pursue tax cuts, it seems reasonable to focus on middle-class relief such as cutting the payroll tax." Says Kristol, "I don't have any problems with the safety net." Which raises a question. If national-greatness conservatism scorns the Christian right, jettisons the struggle to shrink government, and champions an idealistic foreign policy more likely to be supported by *The New York Times* than Dick Armey, in what meaningful, contemporary sense is it conservatism at all?

If you haven't seen much of this heresy in the pages of *The Weekly Standard*, that's because on domestic policy Kristol and Brooks have become a minority in their own office. Unable to turn the *Standard* into a vehicle for their movement, they've essentially stopped writing about economics and social policy. Ironically, as its top editors have inaugurated one of the most interesting Beltway debates in years, the magazine has grown less interesting. Instead, Kristol and Wittmann have started a think tank called the Project for Conservative Reform, run out of the Hudson Institute, with the sole purpose of developing position papers for their movement. And Brooks's next book will aim to infuse national-greatness conservatism with some needed marrow.

But will their ideas have consequences? In Brooks's view, the national-greatness conservatives should become a Republican version of the New Democrats—a movement to reform the party from within. But New Democrats took over the party in the early '90s, after it had lost dismally for more than a decade. The GOP, by contrast, controls the presidency, both houses of Congress, and most of the nation's governors' mansions; most Republicans don't see the need to blow it up and start again. That's why Wittmann is considering a more radical route: the creation of an entirely new political party. "The Bull Moose Party and the 1912 election are the only models I have to work with," he says. McCain, of course, would be the latter-day Teddy Roosevelt. And although the Arizona senator has publicly said he won't challenge Bush, his aides insist he has left himself some wiggle room. ("If Bush vetoes campaign finance reform, all bets are off," says one loyal McCainiac.)

But if Wittmann and Co. hope to create a new Bull Moose Party, they might take a look at what the first one produced: a two-term Democratic president. Instead of forcing the Republicans in a progressive direction, the conflict turned reform-minded voters (the precursors to the independents who backed McCain last spring) into Democrats and drove the Republican faithful into the arms of reactionaries like Warren Harding and Calvin Coolidge. The national-greatness conservatives understand that risk, which may be why they call their strategy "creative destruction." But today, at least, the second half of that slogan seems more likely than the first. ■

Why America is losing its best hospitals.

Sick

By JONATHAN COHN

BOSTON

BETH ISRAEL WAS never Boston's biggest hospital or even its most prestigious. But, in a city filled with world-class medical institutions, it had a special niche. Locals called Beth Israel "Harvard with a heart"—a reference to the Harvard-affiliated hospital's devotion to patients' needs. In 1972 Beth Israel enacted America's first patients' bill of rights. At about the same time, it pioneered primary care nursing, which provided each patient with his or her own nurse, who was responsible for managing his or her care throughout each hospital stay. While other Harvard hospitals built their reputations on technologically driven surgical sub-specialties, Beth Israel concentrated on teaching young doctors in what became some of the nation's best primary care departments. By the early '90s, places like the mammoth Massachusetts General Hospital still had more star-studded faculty, treated more rare disorders, and garnered more national attention. But, for less extravagant care, even many doctors preferred the venerable Jewish community hospital sprawled along Brookline Avenue. "A lot of my friends would say, 'Gee, if I had to have an operation or have a baby, I'd want to go to Beth Israel,'" recalls Dr. Arnold Relman, former editor of *The New England Journal of Medicine*. "Patients uniformly said the best bedside attention you could get was at the BI."

But Beth Israel has fallen on hard times. Over the last two years, Beth Israel—called Beth Israel Deaconess since a recent merger—has bled more than $100 million. In a desperate attempt to balance the books, hospital administra-

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tors have cut back on money-losing programs like psychiatry, social work, and nursing, even though those programs were long seen as central to the hospital's mission. The hospital's doctors and nurses—once known for their relaxed, humane pace—now scramble to meet productivity guidelines that keep the volume of business high. Members of the staff, past and present, throw around terms like "tragic" and "lost halo."

It's not an unusual story. Across the United States, the campaign to cut health care costs in the 1990s hit teaching hospitals hard, since they historically relied upon surpluses from paying customers to subsidize their less lucrative work: academic research, training doctors, and caring for the uninsured. It took a state bailout to rescue the U.C. San Diego Medical Center. Farther north, Stanford University and U.C. San Francisco tried merging to avoid financial crisis; the disastrous marriage dissolved last year. Other hospitals scaled back their commitment to nonprofit work—in the most extreme cases, like George Washington University, by selling off parts of their enterprises to for-profit companies. And in nearly every teaching hospital—in fact, in every hospital, period—the practice of medicine has taken on a rushed, impersonal pace that many health care professionals believe lowers the quality of care.

Did Americans choose this? Actually, no—they chose the opposite. In 1994 Congress rejected a government-run health care system in part because Harry and Louise convinced us that it would "ration" care—that the government would take away good medical care in order to keep costs down. But the end of Clintoncare hasn't meant the end of rationing. It has simply allowed rationing to proceed with less democratic input, according to the rules of the byzantine and perverse health insurance marketplace. In this shakeout, intangibles like time spent training a new surgeon, nurturing less profitable fields of medicine, or simply sitting by a patient's bed have been the first things to go. Beth Israel never stood a chance.

NO ONE BETTER personified Beth Israel's glory days than the man who presided over them, Mitchell Rabkin. Rabkin was just 35 when Beth Israel's presidential search committee plucked him from the staff of Massachusetts General Hospital in 1966, and he had no major administrative experience. But, as an endocrinologist known for his human touch, Rabkin intuitively grasped that the mission of Beth Israel—a hospital founded by Boston's underserved Jewish community—was to put patients first.

Rabkin's innovations became a national model for how hospitals should treat patients and train doctors. Rabkin thought the traditionally rigid hierarchies of hospital care—with doctors reigning imperiously over nurses and staff—impeded collaboration. So he instructed his young physicians to rotate performing more menial hospital jobs, opened up the physicians' cafeteria to the entire staff, and encouraged decision-making by consensus rather than by dictate. (Rabkin held himself to the same standards and was frequently seen picking up litter as he roamed the halls.) Then, convinced that hospitals "tyrannized patients through institutionalized arrogance," as a *Boston Business Journal* profile put it, Rabkin instituted the nation's first-ever patients' bill of rights. It guaranteed patients access to all information about their care and the right to participate in decisions about their treatment—radical notions for the time. Years later it became the basis for a statewide law.

Rabkin also elevated nursing. Prior to the 1970s hospitals largely used nurses as anonymous cogs to deliver the basics of bedside care. In Rabkin's hospital, by contrast, nurses—including a few nurse specialists trained in medical specialties just like physicians—participated in the decision-making process. Beth Israel also started the practice of assigning every patient a "primary care nurse" who would coordinate care, follow the patient from ward to ward, and be on call 24 hours. Not only did this empower the nurses, it guaranteed every patient a knowledgeable contact person who could make the hospital experience less daunting. (Indeed, to reinforce that relationship, Beth Israel saw to it that patients had the same primary care nurse on every subsequent stay at the hospital.) "Beth Israel," recalls Suzanne Gordon, whose book *Life Support* chronicled the work of Beth Israel nurses during the early '90s, "was the most advanced nursing model in the United States, if not the world."

Remarkably, Rabkin did all this while elevating Beth Israel's intellectual stature as well. For much of its existence, Beth Israel's house staff had consisted mainly of part-timers, private practitioners who spent just a portion of their time at the teaching hospital. Rabkin went on a hiring binge and turned Beth Israel into one of America's leading research centers. By the '90s it was, among independent hospitals, the third-largest recipient of federal research funds in the nation. As Beth Israel evolved from an also-ran into one of Boston's jewels, the community took notice. "The sensitivity to patient concerns and the excellence of medical and nursing care for which the hospital is known," *The Boston Globe* editorialized on the hospital's seventy-fifth anniversary, in 1991, "are in large measure attributable to Rabkin's leadership."

OF COURSE, BETH ISRAEL'S success was also attributable to something else: money. Rabkin had the good fortune to take over as president just after the creation of Medicare. Not only did Medicare provide insurance coverage for every retiree in America, but, from a hospital's perspective, it provided the best kind of coverage: fee-for-service. For the most part, if a doctor or hospital billed it, Medicare paid for it, no questions asked. Most private insurance worked the same way, which meant that by the late '60s the vast majority of Americans had not just coverage but generous coverage. As Paul Starr writes in *The Social Transformation of American Medicine*, "Almost every conceivable encouragement was given to hospitals to grow." This flush environment allowed Rabkin to put his frequently costly ideas into practice; it also allowed him to build more facilities. As the '90s dawned, Beth Israel embarked upon a massive $440 million construction effort to enlarge its clinical and research capacity.

But by that time health care had already begun a financial retrenchment. During the '80s, frustration with the rising

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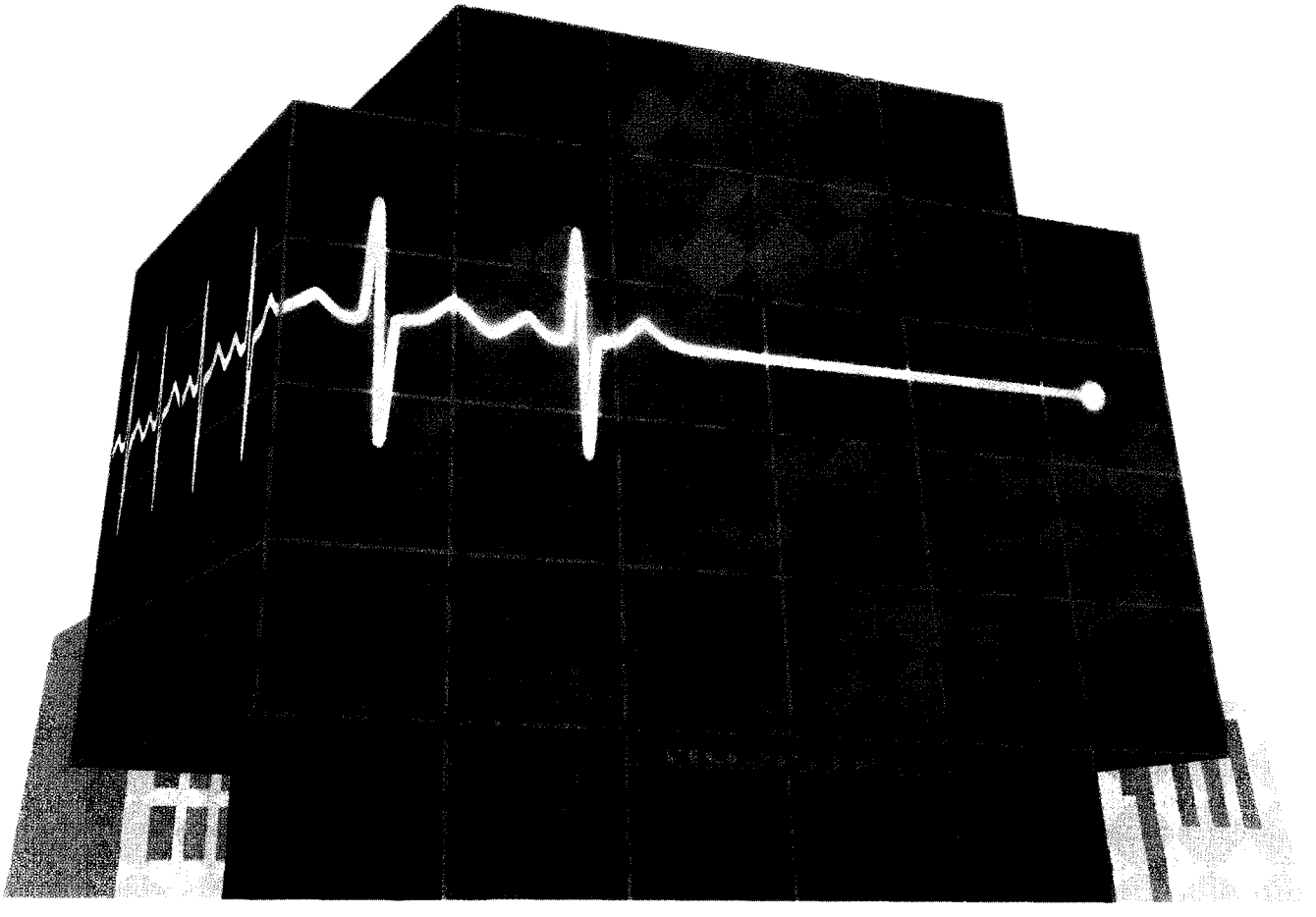
cost of health care had finally led businesses, which had borne the brunt of that burden, to move employees into health maintenance organizations and other forms of managed care. HMOs kept spending down by negotiating lower rates with health care providers, restricting referrals, limiting hospital admissions, and reducing the length of hospital stays. The idea was to force financial discipline on the traditionally independent medical industry.

The medical industry, naturally, did not take kindly to this. Doctors and hospitals warned that less money would mean less, or worse, care. But, as national spending on health care continued to skyrocket, public attention increasingly focused on the apparent excess in American health care. And no city seemed to epitomize the glut better than Boston, with its three world-class medical schools and their affiliated, resource-devouring teaching hospitals. "There were at one time four institutions in the city of Boston capable of doing heart transplants," recalls former Beth Israel physician Howard Hiatt. "Well, one program would have met the needs of the city." According to a 1993 study commissioned by the city and conducted by Nancy Kane of the Harvard School of Public Health, Boston's hospitals had collected some $2 billion more than they needed to cover the costs of patient care and research over the previous eight years.

By the mid-'90s, even Rabkin had come to recognize that the old no-questions-asked system was "pernicious," as he described it to me recently, because it led to out-of-control spending. "No organization maintains itself rust-free forever," Rabkin said. "It's very important to take a careful look at what we're spending and why." And, as if to prove his commitment to streamlining, Rabkin embraced President Clinton's campaign for national health care. It was no secret that the president's plan would squeeze hospitals by keeping overall health care spending in check and, specifically, by cutting down on inpatient care at expensive teaching hospitals. But Rabkin hoped that, in the long run, government would prove a more compassionate manager of care than corporations. At the very least, he figured, a system that guaranteed coverage to every citizen would relieve hospitals like Beth Israel of one of their historic financial burdens: taking care of the uninsured. "With universal coverage," Rabkin testified at a White House event in 1994, "no one is rationed out of the system."

In the end, of course, Clintoncare died under the weight of its own complexity. But the failure to enact national health care reform only intensified the private sector's determination to hold down health care costs on its own—which meant shifting even more employees to managed care and thus giving HMOs even more clout, especially in Massachusetts, where managed care came to dominate the insurance market.

Facing growing financial pressure, Beth Israel brought in a parade of consultants. Their advice: Adapt to the incentives of the insurance market. Like many hospitals, Beth Israel complied, first by buying physician practices on the theory that this would line up a network of primary care providers who would refer patients to Beth Israel beds. The hospital



STEVE McCRACKEN

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also continued its construction campaign, figuring that the best way to make up for smaller financial margins on each patient was simply to see more patients. And Beth Israel started taking cost containment seriously—much to the chagrin of its staff. "I guess the thing that hit me most was spending hours and hours and hours in committee meetings trying to decide strategies that were going to alleviate the fiscal crunch," says one surgeon who left the hospital in the mid-'90s.

Still, the change was incremental: The hospital avoided layoffs, in keeping with its historic policy, and Rabkin stressed the need to treat staff with the utmost care: "You can't pistol-whip employees and expect them to go the extra mile to treat patients with warmth and dignity," he told the *Globe*. At first the plan worked. From 1992 to 1995, the hospital cut some $60 million in expenditures, keeping its budget in the black.

But, despite such favorable news, another development was making Beth Israel's leadership panic: In 1994, Massachusetts General Hospital merged with Brigham and Women's Hospital to form a massive conglomerate called Partners HealthCare. The idea was to increase their bargaining clout with insurance companies, but the merger also threatened to put Boston's other hospitals out of business. So Beth Israel looked for a partner of its own, and, in February 1996, it found one in New England Deaconess, a fourth Harvard teaching hospital.

It seemed like a perfect match: Beth Israel's focus was primary care; Deaconess had made its reputation on a few specialty units with national prominence. Both hospitals had recently built networks of physician practices and smaller community hospitals. The two hospitals' proximity—they were just a block apart—suggested they could physically merge, thus realizing economies of scale. Beth Israel Deaconess, Rabkin vowed, would be "a single streamlined entity rather than just a fatter institution."

But, around the country, hospitals attempting similar partnerships were learning the hard way that institutions rarely mesh in practice as well as they do on paper. Hospitals, particularly teaching hospitals, have distinct cultures that reflect the peculiarities of their populations. Throw in the rivalries inherent in combining two institutions—each department can have only one chief, after all—and mergers can quickly destroy institutions that took generations to build. In the worst cases, like Stanford-UCSF, the mergers have fallen apart. In many more, like the merger between New York University Medical Center and Mount Sinai Medical Center, hostility has festered and earnings are down.

Beth Israel Deaconess had it as bad as any. For one thing, the merger proponents had glossed over some key financial problems in the marriage. Because Deaconess, like Beth Israel, had gone on a building binge in the early '90s, the combined entity was stuck with heavy debt and a lot of extra space. The purchase of physician practices turned out to be a boondoggle that cost Beth Israel Deaconess millions more. Nor did the physical proximity prove as useful as had been hoped: A few hundred yards is not the same as next door, and shuttling patients from one building to the other was not an easy task. Integrating procedurally was no picnic, either: The hospitals had different filing systems, different administrative procedures, and different computer networks. Eventually, the hospital would lose some $35 million because of technological incompatibility in the billing department. Trickiest of all, the two institutions had drastically different cultures. "The way problems got solved at Beth Israel historically was, they'd break out the bagels and cream cheese and sit around a conference table and hash it out," remembers one surgeon heavily involved in the merger. "At the Deaconess, it was run more like a military organization, with the chief of staff or the chairman of the department deciding what was going to happen."

As if all this weren't difficult enough, the financial picture for U.S. hospitals got dramatically worse when Congress passed the Balanced Budget Act of 1997. After years of watching Medicare grow faster than private-sector health care spending—by then under control, thanks to managed care—Congress dramatically reduced hospital reimbursements under Medicare. The logic seemed compelling enough: Why should the government pay more than business for health care? But hospitals had come to rely on Medicare's excess to make up for lost revenue on private patients. Academic hospitals in particular depended upon the extra Medicare money to finance research, teaching, and care for the poor. With that money gone, Beth Israel Deaconess, like many teaching hospitals, plunged into a full-fledged crisis. After years of surpluses, it started posting losses in 1997.

The hospital's troubles spilled into full public view in May 1998, when two patients admitted for routine surgery died after complications with their anesthesia. Anesthesiology had been ground zero in the conflict between the two hospitals. According to physicians involved in the fight, some BI anesthesiologists thought their Deaconess counterparts were concerned only about their paychecks, and some Deaconess anesthesiologists thought their BI counterparts were mollycoddled academics who couldn't handle a professional workload. Shortly before the deaths, the entire Deaconess anesthesiology staff—some 40 doctors in all—walked out. An in-house memo—obtained by the *Boston Herald*—called the situation a staffing "crisis," though a subsequent state investigation found no relationship between the deaths and the personnel problems.

Eventually, it fell to James Reinertsen to put the pieces back together. In 1998 Reinertsen took over from Rabkin as director of CareGroup, the nonprofit parent company for Beth Israel Deaconess. Reinertsen was in many ways Rabkin's diametric opposite. With his crisp business attire, aloof manner, and talk of hospital efficiency, he came across as more CEO than physician—exactly what the search committee wanted. "The idea was that he would put a more businesslike feel to the place," says one former Beth Israel physician familiar with the search. "At that point, the institution was awash in red ink. The notion was, there had to be a complete change."

And there was. After Beth Israel Deaconess lost $71 mil-

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lion in 1998, the hospital brought in Deloitte Consulting. Their mission: to find ways of making Beth Israel Deaconess "smaller, different, and better," as then-hospital President Herbert Kressel said. "We need to achieve a sense of operational discipline—which we have not had before—around how we manage our time, our schedules, what the doctors are doing with their time, and the like," Reinertsen said in an interview for a PBS "Frontline" show that would air in 2000. In May 1999 the hospital broke with its no-layoffs policy and announced it would reduce hospital staff, though most of the cuts were in management personnel. Kressel was out as hospital president shortly thereafter, because, according to the *Globe*, Reinertsen thought he was making changes too slowly. In January 2000, Beth Israel announced it would cut costs by $20 million—and several hundred jobs—though it promised bedside care wouldn't be affected. "This kind of event is difficult, but it's necessary," a hospital spokesperson said. "This is one part of a larger strategy to turn this hospital around and make it better."

NECESSARY, PERHAPS. BUT did the changes really make the hospital better? While the recent firings didn't include bedside nurses, they did include most of the nurse specialists, whom bedside nurses consulted when dealing with unusual cases or particularly sick patients. Primary care nursing continues to exist in the old Beth Israel building, but close patient-nurse contact has been dying a slow death. With fewer support staff—the result of outsourcing and downsizing—to handle a greater patient volume, nurses say they can only do the bare essentials of their work: One nurse told me that patient requests for attention can go unanswered for five, ten, or 15 minutes. "During my nine months of fieldwork, I never saw a nurse sit down and talk with a patient," writes Dana Weinberg, a Boston sociologist and author of *Why Are the Nurses Crying?*, a dissertation (soon to become a book) on the merger and its effect on nursing. "The care is shoddy," one nurse told Weinberg. "It doesn't feel safe from a practitioner's standpoint."

Michael Rosenblatt, the hospital's current president, says the data on patient outcomes and complications suggest otherwise. "There's no evidence that quality has declined," he told me. But most of the physicians I interviewed echoed the nurses' sentiments. "Everybody involved in the hospital sensed a palpable difference in the quality of care that was being delivered," recalls a surgeon who recently left Beth Israel. "The care was technically OK, but the stuff that makes it high quality was gone. The hospital used to be spotless. Now there was stuff on the floor or coffee cups left on stairwells.... [W]hen you saw your patients in the office, they complained. That was a huge change." Another physician, still on staff, says doctors now typically spend about half as much time with patients as they did a decade ago: "There's more paperwork. The managed care referral problems are worse than ever.... The beds are unavailable.... The nurses are more overworked. Their morale is decreased. The place is dirtier. On every level, quality is down." "People are going home sicker," says Andrew Brotman, who was chief of the Beth Israel Deaconess psychiatry department after the merger. "This has costs for their families and their caretakers, which aren't exactly measured."

Last September, Beth Israel Deaconess unveiled one more reorganization plan—the most radical to date. It called for shifting psychiatry, plus part of dermatology and orthopedics, to other hospitals in the CareGroup network while beefing up more lucrative specialties like cardiac surgery and organ transplantation. (After howls from mental health advocates, the hospital agreed to leave some beds open for psychiatric patients.) Shortly thereafter, it announced it would attempt to raise cash by allowing a pharmaceutical manufacturer to purchase the right of first refusal on Beth Israel Deaconess research—an arrangement that would raise questions about the hospital's independence from industry influence. Once again, health consultants cheered the moves.

IN THE LAST few months, Beth Israel Deaconess's finances have started to improve: Deficits are down, and patient volume is up. But, assuming it does survive, it won't be the same hospital it was ten or 15 years ago. And that's unfortunate. While there was wastefulness in Boston's health care market a decade ago—the city was probably due for a hospital shakeout—one would have hoped market pressure would have penalized substandard hospitals and rewarded good ones. Instead, Beth Israel is in trouble largely because it provided good care, which is necessarily expensive. Because it took on burdens like caring for the indigent and training young doctors, which American society largely refuses to shoulder. And, perhaps, because it made some ill-advised business decisions.

All of which might have been worthwhile if, say, downsizing Beth Israel had freed up resources that were then spent on more pressing health care needs, like expanding health insurance or improving preventive care. But the same market forces that pummeled Beth Israel are wreaking havoc throughout the health care system. It's useful to remember that, just ten years ago, the experts confidently predicted that Boston—and most other major cities—had far too many hospital beds. Today Boston and most other major cities have far too *few*. The city's emergency rooms are constantly diverting patients to other hospitals because they have insufficient staff, particularly nurses, to handle the flow. If market forces continue to run amok, Boston's hospital scene will soon resemble a monopoly—with the Partners behemoth the only one left standing and the bed shortage worse than it is now.

Which brings us back to the question: Who voted for this system? Even if there's a plausible argument that Beth Israel-style care was a luxury America could no longer afford, it would have been nice if that decision had been made by the public. Based on the country's reaction to talk of rationing in 1994 and the recent momentum behind HMO reform, the intangibles of Beth Israel-style care seem to matter to people quite a lot. Maybe Americans would have been willing to put more of the nation's wealth into health care if they knew it would mean having a more humane experience in the hospital, being cared for by better-trained physicians, or making sure nobody went without health insurance. Maybe they wouldn't have. Too bad we never found out. ■

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Truth and Consequence

In 1988, *Red Sorghum* announced the talent of Zhang Yimou to this country. Part of the American reaction was surprise at such expert and humane film-making in China, film relatively free of political baggage. The People's Republic had been making almost five hundred feature films a year, but (reportedly) they had been freighted with propaganda. Now a so-called "fifth generation" of artists had arisen in the nationalized film industry, less shackled politically, more cosmopolitan in outlook—they were actually given access to other countries' films.

As far as we could see, no director in this new group was more talented than Zhang Yimou. In time he moved from historical subjects, generally acceptable to the authorities, into the present era, with some jabs at bureaucracy. *The Story of Qiu Ju* (1992) was hardly radical, but it did satirize governmental bumbling, and—even more to our point—it did so with finesse and charm. To have seen *Qiu Ju* is to remember it as a breath of fresh air and as a deft comedy.

Zhang's latest will be remembered, too, though for different reasons. **The Road Home** (Sony Pictures Classics) begins with a successful young man, Luo Yusheng, returning from the city where he lives to his native village in the north. His father, Luo Changyu, has died, and his mother, Zhao Di, is grief-stricken. She is weaving the funeral cloth to cover her husband's coffin, and she insists, as tradition dictates, that his coffin be carried by hand, not transported by truck, from the hospital where he died to the village where he lived. (Thus he will never forget the road home.) This tradition is difficult to carry out—it requires manpower and expense, principally—and while the matter is being mooted in the village, the film moves back in time to its major subject, the meeting and wooing and marrying of Luo Changyu and Zhao Di long ago.

Color blooms as we move back: up to then black and white has predominated. Zhao Di is eighteen, living with her widowed mother, from whom the girl obviously got her sense of tradition. To the village comes Luo Changyu, a twenty-year-old teacher, and for the girl it is absolute love at absolute first sight. Her maneuvers to attract his attention (she is not one of his students) are so simple, so undramatic, that to recount them would reduce them to data and strip them of their loveliness and wit. Of course we know in advance that, whatever the delays and the frustrations, matters are going to come out all right. But suspense simply has no place here. Human experience is the point of this screenplay (by Bao Shi), the begetting of lifelong love. At the end of the flashback—which is a great deal more than a flash—we know why the elderly Zhao Di grieves as she does and why she wants her husband to be carried, in ancient style, back to his village so that he will never lose the way to the site of their love.

The coda of the film, in the present again, is a touch too long, and it is the only section where sentiment risks emphasis. (The final glimpse of the young and smiling Zhao Di, for instance, is not needed.) Still, Zhang shows once again, and overwhelmingly, that he is a masterly director. Without postcard prettiness, he lays the beauties of this village and its mountains before us so quietly and proudly that a warrant of nativity, of belonging, suffuses the film. His gifts of elision, of simple yet precise framing, have never been more engaging, and all these matters are admirable before we even get to the acting.

Zhang Ziyi, who was last seen here in Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, is irresistible as the young Zhao Di. Her prettiness doesn't need discovering: it is immediately there. Then her tenderness, her pride, and her ache arrive as the story progresses. These revelations about the village girl—and therefore about Zhang Ziyi's talent—are enchanting. Zheng Hao, as the young teacher, strikes exactly the right chord of reticence and probity and susceptibility. Sun Honglei as the grown city-dwelling son in the present and Zhao Yuelin as the elderly Zhao Di, his tearful, stubborn mother, fill out the pattern justly. So knowing is the director, so steeped in the film's sense of antiquity, that the small role of an itinerant pottery-mender, played by Zhang Zhongxi, evokes the essence of numberless centuries.

Anyone who has seen *The Wind Will Carry Us* by Abbas Kiarostami will note a resemblance between the Iranian gem and Zhang's film. In both pictures a city man travels to a remote village and reestablishes contact with the deep currents of his country's being. Zhang revealed in a recent interview how much he admires Kiarostami's talent, including the latter's ability to transcend social and political strictures. "Iran shows us the way forward," Zhang said. How beautifully he follows Kiarostami's example—at the same time that he is very much himself.

But films of Zhang's quality and intent are not all that we get from China. **Pavilion of Women** (Universal Focus) is a dire example of how enthusiasm can be drearily exploited. America is interested in Chinese films? Well then, opine wise U.S. studio executives, there's a clear consequence, right? A film made in China with Chinese actors speaking English. Pow! Imagine the glow around the conference table when some bright person proposed this arty-commercial knockout.

What better way to exploit the idea than with a novel by Pearl S. Buck? "Who?" most people nowadays may ask. Well, she was an American author (1892–1973) who lived for a long time in China and wrote many novels—many of them book-club choices—about life there. She was honest and serious and utterly mediocre, which did not prevent her from being awarded the Nobel Prize. Her best-known novel is *The Good Earth*, which was filmed in Hollywood in 1937 with a Chinese family played by actors who, vocally, combined a New York Jewish accent (Paul Muni) with a Germanic piquancy (Luise Rainer), a Midwestern twang (Charley Grapewin), and an airy suavity (Walter Connolly).

But that mélange was preferable to this new film's array of various accents of Chinese actors speaking English. Of course logic about language is not exactly prime in film-making. Many a time in American films, actors prove that they are, say, German by speaking English with a German accent; here authenticity is achieved, the film-makers think, by having Chinese actors, in a film made in China, speak English with a Chinese accent. One of this picture's few rewards is the resulting risibility.

The screenplay, adapted from Buck's book by Luo Yan and Paul R. Collins, begins in 1938 and concerns a wealthy family trying to live within the walls of its luxe estate unaffected by political turmoil

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outside. For her own reasons, the matriarch of the family purchases a concubine for her husband. The concubine gets involved with the matriarch's son, and there are other emotional twists among others on the estate; yet for all the intended emotional storms, for all the political battling outside, the general tone of the picture is placid and dull. The mechanics of the plot are highlighted by a politically benign ending that must have brought the present government's stamp of approval.

Still, connoisseurs of acting can be impressed by Willem Dafoe's performance as an American missionary doctor. Dafoe appears in films of widely varying value, but he never wavers in his moral obligation as an actor. If he accepts a role, he—quite evidently—makes sure that his contribution is as valid as he can make it. In *Pavilion of Women* he ensures that every moment of his appearances is as true as the context can permit. His verity, I'd say, comes from his power of concentration—an approach that he shares with, among others, Ben Kingsley. An actor's ability to shut out of his or her mind absolutely everything except the character may be one definition of talent. ■

Robert Brustein on Theater

The Jew Who Buried Hitler

THE COVER OF a recent issue of *The New Yorker* depicts a lone spectator scowling in the midst of a theater audience rocking with laughter. The unhappy dissenter is Adolf Hitler, and the audience, of course, is watching **The Producers** (St. James Theatre), Mel Brooks's musical remake of his classic movie.

Everyone is familiar with the premise of *The Producers*: how the failed producer, Max Bialystock, gets the idea from his nerdy accountant, Leopold Bloom, that by over-subscribing a flop he can make more money than he could by producing a hit. Bialystock and Bloom finally discover the play "that will close on page four," namely *Springtime for Hitler*, an epic by the neo-Nazi Franz Liebkind (Brad Oscar) designed "to show the world the true Hitler, the Hitler with a song in his heart." When the play turns out to be an unexpected, if unwanted, success, Bialystock is convicted of larceny, despite his heartrending defense ("I know I'm a back-stabbing, despicable crook—but I had no choice. I'm a Broadway producer"). After a few months of hesitation on a tropical isle, Bloom elects to join Bialystock in jail, though both are soon released to bring their new convict musical, *Prisoner of Love*, to Broadway. It is a hit—an intended hit.

Obviously there are some people—other than Hitler and his skinhead following—who would frown at *The Producers*. Letters to *The New York Times* are already charging Brooks with insensitivity to the Holocaust. Let us concede that insensitivity and bad taste are inseparable from the production; indeed, they are practically its organizing principles. Let us also concede that Brooks's willingness to give offense is the primary reason why this event is proving so exhilarating. And the exhilaration is palpable. Never in my long theatergoing life have I been part of such an ecstatic audience. I do not mean people desperate, at $100 a throw, to applaud their expenditure. I mean a really happy audience—wreathed in smiles before, during, and after the performance.

Despite some early misgivings, I had a pretty terrific time myself. Admittedly, Nathan Lane as Max Bialystock, while unquestionably very funny, still suffers from his compulsive eagerness to please. In his second attempt to play a role originated by Zero Mostel (Pseudolus in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* was the first), Lane again shows the extent to which he lacks Mostel's subversive ferocity, his manic marginality. In his black slouch hat and red velvet jacket, he is also much more soi-disant than

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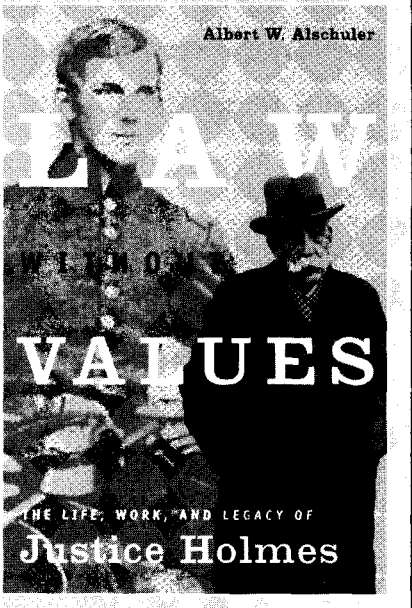

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the seedy Zero—no strands of hair pasted over his forehead or rolls of fat draping over his belt. And although Matthew Broderick is priceless as the nerdy Leopold Bloom, carrying his remnant of a security blanket like a lost flag, he cannot quite scale the heights of uncontrollable hysteria that made Gene Wilder such a terrified wreck in the part. The movie also had a tougher satiric edge than the show. (A younger Mel Brooks, for example, would never have tolerated the musical's courtroom climax, with its soggy reconciliations and unconvincing character reversals.)

But the musical of *The Producers* is a more lighthearted creation than the movie, almost a different species, with its own special conventions and demands, for which Lane and Broderick may be more appropriate casting. What it sacrifices in savagery it gains in form, enjoying a tighter, more coherent structure than the somewhat ungainly film. Thomas Meehan, who collaborated on the book, has managed to curb some of Brooks's excesses as a writer, and Susan Stroman, who wittily staged and brilliantly choreographed the show, has avoided some of his overkill as a director.

To be sure, excess and overkill are Brooks's trademarks, the qualities responsible for his wildest comic flights—the epic farting scene in *Blazing Saddles*; the "morning after" in *Young Frankenstein* when Madeline Kahn, having been shtupped by the Frankenstein monster, wakes up warbling, "Ah, sweet mystery of life!" (not to mention the scene in which the monster and Dr. Frankenstein appear on stage in top hat and tails, tap-dancing to "Puttin' on the Ritz"); Brooks himself playing Louis XIV, surrounded by a bevy of beauties, in *The History of the World, Part I*, demonstrating to the movie audience why "it's good to be the king." But we have occasionally suffered the defects of these virtues in such clinkers as *Life Stinks* (so did the movie) and *Robin Hood: Men in Tights* (whose only funny element was its title). Brooks's unwieldy sense of form may have been eliminated from the musicalized *Producers*, but mercifully his irrepressible good humor and his fecund imagination were preserved. The evening is virtually an *hommage* to this great comic artist, with dozens of quotations from his past movies. Indeed, his voice can be heard everywhere, even on stage, lip-synched by an actor singing the immortal lines: "Don't be stupid, be a smarty/Come and join the Nazi Party."

Rather than look for holes in the fabric, we ought to embrace this new old-fashioned musical comedy with gratitude. It is a refreshing tonic after all those decades of moral instruction from Rodgers and Hammerstein, and urban neurosis from Stephen Sondheim, and melodious angst from "new wave" musicals such as *Falsettos* and *Rent*. As John Lahr has observed in his *New Yorker* notice, *The Producers* recalls the good old days of comedian-driven musicals—comedians, we should note, who were originally schooled in vaudeville and burlesque. Lahr's father, Bert, was one of the linchpins of this movement (and his goofy, pained innocence seems to have influenced Lane's performance in the current production). So were Bobby Clark, Jimmy Savo, Ed Wynn, and Jimmy Durante—and later Milton Berle, Sid Caesar, Phil Silvers, and Zero Mostel. A number of these comics were Jews, including Lahr, though he rarely played Jews on stage. (I fondly remember him as a raffish plutocrat in *The Beauty Part*, explaining his state of undress to his wife: "I had to give the maid a severe dressing-down.")

It took Mel Brooks to tap the inexhaustible oil well of satiric deflation at the foundation of the Jewish experience. This mother lode he pumped to a fare-thee-well in the "2000 Year Old Man" series, playing an aging Yiddish kvetch who claims to have been a participant in all recorded history. ("Did you know Joan of Arc?" "I went with her, dummy, I went with her!") The same ironic contrast between lowliness and loftiness characterizes *The Producers*. Take as a pictorial example the theater posters on the walls of Max Bialystock's office—*This Too Shall Pass*, *The Kidney Stone*, *The Breaking Wind*, *A Streetcar Named Murray*, *She Shtups to Conquer*, *Katz*, *High Button Jews*—which deflate some of Broadway's most sanctified commodities with outrageous Jewish humor.

Of course, Brooks was hardly the first to ridicule Hitler. In *The Great Dictator*, Chaplin satirized him as a pompous egotist (with a Jewish barber as his double) famously bouncing a globe of the world off his behind, when not vying with Mussolini over whose barber chair could attain greater height. Brecht turned him into a narcissistic actor in *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*. Even the Three Stooges did a number on him with their crude brand of thumb-in-the-eye slapstick. Still, nobody can touch Brooks when it comes to letting the air out of evil icons (he did the same to Torquemada and the Inquisition), generally by exposing how much they have in common with showbiz. Here he turns Gauleiters and storm troopers into chorus boys, while ripping the last shred of dignity from Hitler by making him a Judy Garland wanna-be whispering "I love you" to the audience that he is trying to seduce.

Outraged letters to the editor notwithstanding, it is a lot easier to make fun of the Nazi movement now than it was thirty-three years ago. It would be hard to replicate today that supreme moment in the film when the audience, watching the opening number of *Springtime for Hitler*, is shocked into paralyzed silence before bursting into applause. For one thing, we are half a century away from the event; for another, we are too familiar with the movie. In the musical, therefore, this "gay romp with Adolf and Eva in Berchtesgaden" is performed before a live audience applauding it in the St. James—not so much a play-within-a-play as a hit-within-a-hit.

So the satire on Nazism is the easy part. But like *Springtime for Hitler*, *The Producers* is designed "to offend people of all races, creeds, and religions"—not a difficult task in our present age of hypersensitivity. Theatrical gays get the worst (or the best) of it. There is a rich scene in the apartment of Roger de Bris (a stage director, not a *mohel*), whom Bialystock and Bloom are trying to sign for their intended flop. It includes a staircase entrance by this flaming queen in a huge wig and sequined dress, not to mention the classic "Walk this way" moment in which Bialystock and Bloom start swishing behind a particularly effeminate majordomo. Piling Pelion on Ossa, it also features four or five superbly funny entrances by the director's entirely gay production team, including his "common-law assistant" Carmen Ghia (Roger Bart). Like other groups adept at self-satire (Jews and blacks, for example), some gays may find this kind of send-up insulting in the hands of an outsider; but it is really no different from the kind of bitchy humor gays often turn on themselves.

De Bris ends up playing Hitler after Franz Liebkind, the Nazi who wrote *Springtime for Hitler*, literally breaks a leg on opening night. (The musical wisely drops the outdated hippie character played in the movie by Dick Shawn.) Leibkind's assistant tells de Bris, "You're going out there a silly, hysterical screaming queen, and you're coming back a passing-for-straight great big Broadway star!" As camped by the incomparable Gary Beach, de Bris's first entrance as "Adolf Elizabeth Hitler" ("descended from a long line of English Queens") is enough to guarantee him his Tony. Glowering at the audience with his hands guarding his crotch, he suddenly crumples his body and lifts his arm above his head like a demented teacup, displaying a gleaming set of teeth below his Hitler moustache.

Radical feminists will not like this show much either, since it signals the return of woman as sex object—the long-legged, skimpily dressed showgirl sashaying in her

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traditional bent-kneed style. These dress parades are almost invariably used for comic purposes, as in the climactic Third Reich production number, when the female chorus descends the stairs in abbreviated Bavarian costumes, with a collection of sausages, pretzels, and German eagles on their heads. Stroman concludes the sequence with a Busby Berkeley-inspired extravaganza—even zanier than the one in the movie, involving goose-stepping storm trooper puppets against a mirrored back wall borrowed from *A Chorus Line*—that redefines the word "show-stopper." (She has also choreographed a dancing chorus of homing pigeons.)

Also borrowed from a more Aristophanic, less censorial theatrical period is the buxom sidekick, often a nurse, here a secretary—a Swedish beauty with a hyphenated name so long it takes a court stenographer three minutes to record it. As played by Cady Huffman, Ulla (to use the shortened form) is a willing object of Bialystock's and Bloom's lust, especially after arousing them with a particularly lubricious song and dance ("Even though we're sitting down, we're giving you a standing ovation"). It is nice to be reminded that once upon a time in the theater men and women were allowed to feel sexual attraction.

As if enough constituencies had not been offended yet, the *Times* has also received letters from angry people in Florida retirement homes protesting that handicapped old ladies are among those mistreated in the show. Bialystock raises capital by servicing wealthy old widows, each with her own suggestive nickname ("Hold-me, Touch-me," "Lick-me, Bite-me," "Kiss-me, Feel-me"). As a form of foreplay, all of them propose suggestive games, to which an exhausted Bialystock replies, "Let's play a game where there's absolutely no sex—the Jewish princess and her husband." Among a number of rousing production numbers is one, "Little Old Lady Land," in which these aging women (some of them played by men) raucously perform on walkers. Only in America could it be considered offensive to depict aging women as capable of erotic and energized behavior.

The quality of performance and production is at a consistently high level. Matthew Broderick plays Bloom with hunched modesty and adenoidal shyness, performing (particularly in "I Wanna Be a Producer") with surprising musical comedy assurance. Despite my reservations about Nathan Lane, he has never been more disciplined than here under Stroman's watchful direction, though I dread to think what he'll be doing with the part three months hence. All of the other aforementioned actors, and the well-drilled ensemble that supports them, add energy and gaiety. William Ivy Long's costumes are witty and splashy, and Robin Wagner's sets are sumptuous recreations of a glorious Broadway past.

But the real hero of the evening is Melvin Brooks. Over the marquee of one of Bialystock's flops is the credit: "Entire production conceived, devised, thought up and supervised by Max Bialystock." Brooks, who in addition to all his other duties is one of the producers of *The Producers*, might claim the same credits. His music, though a decent enough approximation of Broadway show tunes, seems rather derivative, but his book and his lyrics are entirely nonpareil, and so is the animating idea behind the show. The Jew who finally buried Hitler, Mel Brooks demonstrates that comedy is not only capable of exposing stupidity and pretension. At times, it can also exorcise and nullify evil—not as powerfully, but sometimes more lastingly than a hundred Sherman tanks, a thousand B-42s, or a million GIs. ■

Strangled by Roots

By ALAN WOLFE

American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century by Gary Gerstle

(Princeton University Press, 454 pp., $29.95)

THROUGHOUT THE twentieth century, Gary Gerstle observes, the United States has been influenced by "two powerful and contradictory ideals." The first ideal is civic nationalism: appalled by the preference for regionalism and limited government, it aimed to create a nation-state capable of ensuring equal treatment for all. The second ideal is racialized nationalism: in treating the country as reserved primarily for white men, it looked with disdain on minorities and women, insisted on the thorough assimilation of immigrants, and persecuted radicals who held dissenting views about the goals of the American state. Gerstle seeks to understand how we have wrestled with the profound tensions between these two ideals, and in the process he raises the important question of whether "a new American civic nation, strong but tolerant, is within reach."

During the New Deal, Roosevelt was accused of being a traitor to his class; but the real Rooseveltian traitor, as Gerstle tells the story, was not Franklin but Theodore. Unlike members of other patrician families in America, such as the one in possession of the presidency before and after Bill Clinton, Teddy Roosevelt saw no particular virtues in hereditary advantage. Quite the contrary. In his view, the Brahmin aristocracy was too refined, too preoccupied with social graces, to lead a dynamic society. Seeking volunteers for his charge up San Juan Hill, Roosevelt included Jews, Catholics, and Native Americans among his troops. Ignoring bureaucratic command structures and formal rules, he created "a frontier-type environment, where social distinctions and rank counted for little." War required men of courage, not men of connections.

When he became president, Roosevelt brought a meritocratic sensibility also to his domestic programs. He attacked the trusts for the same reason that he turned his back on aristocrats: too much of their wealth came from rigging the rules, and not from playing fairly by them. Unlike other Republicans (then or now), Roosevelt "acknowledged that grinding poverty was preventing workers, even those with full political and civil rights, from achieving economic security or the leisure necessary to cultivate civic virtue." Compared with others of his class, he appreciated the contributions of immigrants. "Jews, Injuns, Chinamen, Italians, Huns—the rubbish of the earth I hate—I've got some Winchesters and when the massacring begins, I can get my share of 'em, and what's more I will," Frederic Remington fulminated in a letter to Owen Wister. But Roosevelt, writes Gerstle, "understood how large a proportion of the working class comprised immigrants and their children. His New Nationalist program was meant to bring them into the nation, not just politically and culturally, but economically as well."

For all his bombast and his political miscalculations, Roosevelt welcomed the new

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society that was coming into being in the United States. But Gerstle does not wish to judge Roosevelt only in the context of his time. He wants also to invoke the standards of our time, and here he finds much wanting. Despite the fact that Roosevelt's ideas could be used to pursue ideas of equality between the sexes, Gerstle notes the "the deeply gendered nature of his nationalist thought." Appreciative of immigrants Roosevelt may have been, but he wanted them to Americanize, and therefore he feared radicals and anarchists. And Roosevelt's inclusiveness, which crossed the boundary of ethnicity, stopped at the boundary of race.

There were no African Americans among the Rough Riders, but there were four regular regiments involved in the taking of San Juan Hill that were black. Despite their valor in battle, Roosevelt never welcomed the racial mixing that took place during the Spanish-American War in 1898. He also did little to win black support for his domestic agenda, going so far as to side with Southern whites at the expense of blacks at the Progressive Party convention in 1912. Roosevelt, Gerstle concludes, stood for principles that "welcomed all law-abiding residents into the polity and disavowed distinctions based on race"—but at the same time he imagined "America as a land meant for Europeans in which blacks had either a subordinate place or no place at all." Ethnically inclusive but racially exclusive, Roosevelt's views represent, for Gerstle, "the true American dilemma" of "a nation divided against itself."

Those who followed Roosevelt were not so torn. He may have believed that civic ideals were forged in wartime, but World War I, in Gerstle's view, tilted the balance between America's two traditions in favor of the racial one. In the aftermath of the war, America's political leaders undertook what Gerstle calls "a disciplinary project breathtaking in its scope." The Palmer raids shut off dissent and enforced political conformity. A series of laws passed by Congress halted the flow of immigration. So pervasive did racism become that even liberals such as Fiorello LaGuardia and Representative Samuel Dickstein began to bait Asians and Mexicans in order to protect Jews and Italians.

Thus it came to pass that when civic ideals once again became dominant in the 1930s, during the presidency of Franklin Roosevelt, they were inevitably tainted by the racism of the 1920s. FDR, Gerstle writes, was under little pressure to adopt anti-immigrant views, "because the disciplinary project had accomplished its aims, reducing the number of immigrants and increasing the pressures on those already here to Americanize." And however radical some of his legislative proposals, Roosevelt was something of a monarchist, capable of using language that made a place for Southern whites and Republican businessmen as well as union workers and displaced farmers. The Great Depression created a domestic situation not unlike the home front during wartime, which Roosevelt was quick to exploit. When real war finally came, everyone from communist to capitalist became a patriot, uniting together to defeat the enemy.

Franklin Roosevelt, unlike Theodore Roosevelt, avoided attributing individual abilities to group characteristics, but he was nevertheless incapable of containing the appeals of racist nationalism. Anxious to keep the white South in the Democratic fold, Roosevelt put civil rights for African Americans on the back burner. America may have fought World War II against fascism, but it relied on racist messages itself in its campaigns against Japan, and it tolerated racial segregation within its own armed forces.

Despite the cold war and McCarthyism, Gerstle believes that the Rooseveltian nation survived the 1950s. McCarthy himself bore unmistakable Teddy Roosevelt traits, such as his "exaggerated and unruly masculinity" and his conviction that the WASP elite was effete. The signature legislation of the decade included the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952, passed over Harry Truman's veto, which made it easier for Asian immigrants to become citizens but also tightened controls on radicals. Between them, Gerstle believes, anti-communism and nativism constituted a warning "that minorities had better behave, that they should do everything possible to play by America's rules." And, generally speaking, minorities did behave. Jews made no conspicuous efforts to save Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, so palpable was their desire for acceptance into the American mainstream. By the end of the Eisenhower presidency, the tensions between America's two nationalist traditions were widening—"precursors," Gerstle writes, "of political and social upheaval."

Civic nationalism, in Gerstle's account, proved powerful enough to survive anti-Communist crusades, in part because anti-communism was a part of its crusade; but it fell before the twin challenges of black nationalism and the Vietnam War. To be sure, Martin Luther King Jr. appealed to the tradition of civic nationalism, but with his death the momentum for racial equality passed into the hands of such nationalist groups as SNCC, CORE, the Black Panthers, and the Nation of Islam. These were not majority movements, as Gerstle concedes. (Indeed, he suggests that they may never have amounted to more than 50,000 people.) Still, they were "an articulate vanguard," and their influence was "immense." Not only did their "utter fearlessness" appeal to young blacks, but their way of protest was attractive also to other minorities and to some whites. Jews such as Meir Kahane, socially active Catholic priests, even the neo-conservative Michael Novak found in black nationalism "a new imaginative landscape on which to build their own individual and group identities."

The Vietnam War furthered the collapse of the American state. Student protests disrupted campus after campus, forcing university administrators to call in the police. Soldiers themselves refused to fight. Veterans were anything but grateful for their experience. Blacks and whites fought together, and in so doing they seemed to strengthen civic nationalism, but at the same time racial integration destroyed "for all time Theodore Roosevelt's dream of war as the crucible for forging a superior white race." With the inability of the American military to impose its will on the world, Gerstle concludes, America had come full circle from the Spanish-American War. "The bonds of nationhood had weakened, and the Rooseveltian program of nation building that had created those bonds in the first place had been repudiated. A nationalist era that had begun in the early decades of the twentieth century had come to a stunning end."

IN THE CORRIDORS of American academia, Gary Gerstle would have to be classified as a moderate. This is the age, after all, of "whiteness studies," according to which some groups that we usually regard as white—say, the Italians and the Irish—may be regarded historically as if they were black, because they once occupied the bottom of the social scale. In such an analysis, "whiteness" is not a biological characteristic, it is a socially constructed category that serves the powerful as an instrument for maintaining their power, and also as a way for whites to maintain their distance from non-whites. In contrast to such scholars of whiteness, Gerstle writes that he does not see "race at the root of every expression of American nationalism"; and this is just one example of his distance from contemporary academic conventions. He is critical of the two Roosevelts, but he acknowledges the power of their appeals to civic ideals. He even calls the founding of the Progressive Party "a crucial moment in the development of American liberalism" that would "help America become the greatest nation on the earth." These are not politically correct expressions. Moreover, Gerstle writes for the general reader, which is a rather controversial thing to do among academics at research universities. And he defies the postmodern protest against coherent narrative and reverts to the idea that history

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can be told through an all-encompassing story: his book is that rare academic thing, a text with a beginning and an end, and even a message sandwiched in between.

And yet these attractive features of *American Crucible* serve mainly as a melancholy reminder of how far leftward the scholarly study of American history has shifted. For Gerstle is finally no stranger to the assumptions of the academic left about the nature of the American experience. In his book they are merely more implicit than explicit. Indeed, they are the unexamined premises that permeate everything Gerstle writes, so that by the time he is done any difference between him and scholars of "whiteness"—or, for that matter, of "blackness"—is impossible to discern. His analysis, too, is finally a racialist analysis.

Gerstle's language is riddled with the terminologies of the moment. Thus Theodore Roosevelt's nationalism was not merely "gendered"; he also celebrated "hybridity," even while trying to "reinscribe" African American "subordination." There would be no problem with such language if something in the way of understanding were gained. But much is lost. To ungender himself, should Roosevelt have included women in his Cuban campaigns? The notion crosses Gerstle's mind, but we can be fairly sure that it never crossed Roosevelt's. Gender did not exist when Roosevelt lived, though sex did. Surely historians should be alive to the perils of anachronism.

By invoking the terms of today's fashions to account for yesterday's realities, Gerstle transforms ad hoc attitudes and improvised historical actions into hard, programmatic categories, and then he imposes those categories on people whom they never fit. In connection with J. Edgar Hoover, for example, he invokes the Foucauldian notion of a "disciplinary project." Hoover was a bureaucrat in search of more turf, and he found it by transforming the FBI into an agency that hunted criminals and Communists. But to depict Hoover as a figure out of Foucault gives him more credit (and, in an odd way, less credit) than he deserves.

Then there is Gerstle's myopia. The Black Panthers receive considerable discussion in his book, while Christian conservatives receive close to none. Yet surely any account of the decline of the Rooseveltian nation ought to include those who put Christ before country, let alone gun-toting libertarians, neo-Confederates, and dyed-in-the-wool isolationists. Throughout *American Crucible*, but especially toward the end of the book, historical figures associated with the left assume a magnitude that is absurdly larger than life. The rantings of Molefi Kete Asante of Temple University are described as "seminal," an obscure radical priest named Geno Baroni enjoys two different treatments, and the literary scholar Janice Radway is treated as an authority on American ethnicity. This, too, could be excused if Gerstle were writing a history of the American left's relationship to civic nationalism and racial nationalism. But while it sometimes appears that Gerstle is more interested in the left than in America, he is aware that Ronald Reagan did more to shape the country's destiny than Radway, which is why the paragraph after the paragraph about her finally turns to the subject of American conservatism, which is largely ignored throughout the book.

Like so many leftist professors, Gerstle is obsessed with race. I do not mean that he makes the failure of America to treat African Americans as full citizens central to his story. The American record on race is hardly one that inspires pride in the nation. Like Gerstle, I do not believe that the ideal of a civic nation has yet been achieved in the United States, and lingering racism is the reason for this failure. Yet Gerstle wishes to accomplish more than a historical treatment of American racism. He wishes to advance the idea of race as a central analytical category, accounting adequately for both blacks and whites and creating destinies for those who fit within its respective categories.

One race that appears with considerable frequency in Gerstle's book is the "Nordic" one. I confess to shuddering even at the use of such a word, but it does have a fairly precise technical meaning: it applies to the Nordic countries, of which there are five (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden). If one wants to be a bit less technical, it could also include countries that in one way or another were introduced to variations of Nordic mythology, such as the Germany of Richard Wagner. But Gerstle's use of the term is far broader. Franklin Roosevelt's popularity, we are told, was racial in nature: "he became a kind of Nordic father whom everyone, Jews and Catholics included, wanted to claim as his or her own as a way of avowing a vicarious Nordic ancestry," as if Catholics, wherever they come from, cannot be Nordic, while anyone from Holland, where the Roosevelt clan originated, can be Nordic. Of course, this makes very little sense. Holland is primarily Protestant, but it has a significant Catholic population, and neighboring Belgium, the Flemish part of which is indistinguishable ethnically from Holland, is overwhelmingly Catholic.

And so it goes with each invocation of Gerstle's use of the term "Nordic." Dorothea Lange's photograph "Migrant

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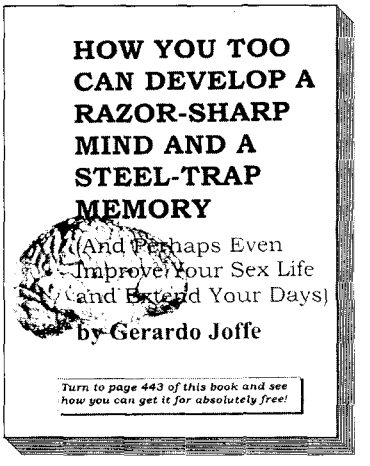
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Mother," taken in 1936, captures in a single image what it means to be poor. But Gerstle looks at the image of this unfortunate woman and sees her ethnicity. "She was the universal American," he writes. "She was a mother; she was also Nordic." I do not think of Humphrey Bogart as having any particular ethnicity at all, but Gerstle calls him a "capable Nordic." And, in perhaps the sloppiest use of the term, Gerstle manages to classify Finns—the one group to whom the term most directly applies—as ethnics hiding their true identity in the hopes of becoming Nordic types.

We might consider allowing Gerstle his terminology, if for no other purpose than to suggest that immigrants who were short and dark confronted more difficulties assimilating than those who were tall and blond. But Gerstle has as hard a time dealing with Italians as he does with Scandinavians. To be sure, there was one famous American in the former category, Joe DiMaggio, who married one famous American who may have belonged in the latter category, Norma Jean Mortenson. (Since we do not know the identity of Marilyn Monroe's father, we cannot know half of her ethnic make-up. Her birth name, changed at baptism to Baker, suggests Danish or Swedish ancestry, even though Gerstle, who must classify everyone he discusses, goes ahead and calls her "Anglo-Saxon.") DiMaggio, writes Gerstle, "was the model American ethnic: hardworking, respectful, and reserved, someone who played baseball brilliantly, but in a quiet, unprepossessing, even Anglo-Saxon, way." His success demonstrates that the child of Southern European immigrants could become fully assimilated, even if there were conditions: "In public, the courteous and gentlemanly DiMaggio ... was never heard to utter a mean word or to issue a threat; nor was he ever seen in the company of disreputable, mob-related figures."

The problem with Gerstle's treatment of DiMaggio is not its descent into cliché. The problem is that it is incorrect. One need not subscribe to Richard Ben Cramer's recent screed against DiMaggio to recall that the man was known for hanging out at Toots Shor's, which was also frequented by a mobster or two. Moreover, DiMaggio was not the only Italian-American success story of the period. Had Gerstle chosen to discuss Frank Sinatra, a decision that would have given more texture to his story by offering events a bit less predictable in their interpretation, he would have had to come to the conclusion that very public identification with the Mob—and very public association with African Americans such as Sammy Davis Jr., not to mention the Rat Pack rowdiness that violated every canon of American respectability—was no obstacle to ethnic acceptance in postwar America. And Gerstle's description of DiMaggio is worse than incorrect; it is incoherent. If being a graceful ballplayer can turn someone into an Anglo-Saxon, then "race" hardly matters at all. Why, then, elevate race into the explanation for nearly everything that happens in America?

DiMaggio is not the only Italian-American whose story Gerstle twists to his own purposes. Frank Capra was born in Sicily, and arrived in the United States when he was six years old. He is most famous for the mushy idealism of films such as *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* (1936) and *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), starring, respectively, Gary Cooper (a "Yankee," in Gerstle's inevitable characterization) and Jimmy Stewart (who contributes to "the adulation of the Nordic" that runs through the film). Capra wrote about his heritage: he hated it, and he wanted to escape as far as possible from it.

But Gerstle cannot accept Capra's own words. Instead he tells the story of Capra's brother Ben, who had left Sicily before the rest of the family. Captured after he tried to jump ship, Capra escaped to New Orleans and was taken in by a black family—"presumably," Gerstle remarks with abandon, "becoming a Negro," exactly as the scholars of whiteness studies suggest. "Was Capra himself distressed by his brother's descent to the level of the Negro?" asks Gerstle, thus shifting from something that "presumably" happened to something that actually did happen. "We cannot be sure," he answers, shifting back again, "but it certainly seems significant," he continues, shifting once more, "that Capra uses the story of his brother's racial descent as a framework within which to understand his own desperate quest for ascent." Out of such wild conjecture and dogmatic supposition do academic historians sustain their theories.

Gerstle has so much trouble with ethnic categories and racial categories because he has so much trouble with all his categories. Scholars of gayness have a category called "homophobic," and Gerstle, concentrating his attention on Joe McCarthy's thinly veiled attacks on effete bureaucrats, is quick to put him there. Never mind that McCarthy hired as his chief assistant Roy Cohn, a not terribly closeted homosexual, and watched with blithe disregard as Cohn and David Shine made quite public fools of themselves. In a similar manner, students of gender often make a distinction between the private woman and the public woman—the former, stuck in the home, falls victim to the feminine mystique, while the latter, out in the workplace, becomes a model of liberation. Not too many career women could be found in American popular culture before the 1960s, but one who fit the bill was Lois Lane, Clark Kent's colleague (and sort-of girlfriend) in what Gerstle describes as the "make-believe Nordic nation" of the *Superman* comics. But Gerstle is determined to prove the degree to which racial nationalism hinders women, even though women are not a race, and so he treats Lois Lane not as a model of liberation but as evidence of liberation's dangers. After all, her goal was to win Clark Kent's love and thereby to expose his secret. Give a historian a theory, even one as simple as positing a tension between two different ideals, and before you know it everything is bent out of shape to fit the one category or the other.

GERSTLE CONCLUDES BY asking whether the tradition of racial nationalism has so atrophied that America can finally build a strong society of civic inclusion. He notes that some American intellectuals—he lists Arthur Schlesinger Jr., Diane Ravitch, E. J. Dionne, and other names from the left, the right, and the center, including my own—believe that such a national redemption is possible. Gerstle is, on the whole, fair to us. Liberals who supported Bill Clinton's efforts to shift the Democratic Party to the center, he writes generously, "aspire to what is best in the American inheritance—the creation of a society of equal opportunity in which no one suffers on account of race, religion, gender, or creed." In a similarly judicious tone, he points out correctly that John McCain, a civic nationalist from America's other party who much admires Theodore Roosevelt, shares none of Roosevelt's racial obsessions.

Yet despite this revival of civic ideals among American intellectuals, Gerstle is not convinced that our "disciplinary project" can succeed. He believes that America is destined for one of two possible futures: "either the resurgence of a strong, solidaristic, and exclusionary national identity of the sort that has existed in the past," or "a weaker identity, one that makes fewer claims on us, that allows us to cultivate strong ethnic, religious, regional, or transnational identities, but that is capable of generating only thin loyalty to nationalist ideals and limited ties of feeling and obligation to Americans outside our core identity groups."

Gerstle's first option, nightmarish as it may sound, is actually a left-wing historian's fantasy. Patrick Buchanan's program comes closest to meeting its terms, but he is an utter political failure. Even extremely conservative Republicans now fall over themselves trying to impress blacks and Hispanics of their sincerity. Militarism, America First patriotism, unquestioned adherence to Protestant morality: these are as foreign to America today as the Ku

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Klux Klan and the McCarran-Walter Act.

Like so many contemporary historians, Gerstle concentrates on the public language used by politicians to explain, and to justify, the world around them. When he turns to contemporary America, however, he never makes the obvious point that overt racism—not only Frederic Remington's ugly diatribe, but even Teddy Roosevelt's eugenic musings—simply cannot be found in official public discourse these days. This by no means suggests that racism has disappeared from the United States, but it strongly suggests that racial nationalism has disappeared. No credible public figure—literally none—seeks to bind white Americans closer together by means of rhetoric that sets them against blacks.

One would barely know this from Gerstle's book, but the United States is poised to take civic nationalism seriously for the first time in its history. To do so, it will have to overcome not the lingering racial nationalism of the past, but the fashionable racial multiculturalism of the present. Gerstle is remarkably soft on multiculturalism, even in its hardest versions. He treats Maulana Ron Karenga, the black nationalist who found his cause with the invention of Kwanzaa, as engaged merely in a search for "an authentic and proud past on which Afro-Americans might build a new future." Academic multiculturalists are in no sense separatists, in Gerstle's account. They are people seeking a "bold" program "to reestablish a sense of community on a basis of ethnicity, race, or gender." When Theodore Roosevelt obsesses about race, Gerstle condemns him; but when contemporary black nationalists do the same thing, he praises them. The fact is that ideas that once served to block America from becoming the civic nation that it ought to be are found these days on the left side of the political and intellectual spectrum rather than on the right side; but this irony passes Gerstle by.

Fortunately, hard multicultural ideas do not cut very deeply in America. We are increasingly a multicultural reality, and so "Nordic" ideals, or whatever else you want to call the worldviews of Euro-Americans, will blend together with the worldviews of people who come here from all over the world. And this soft multiculturalism is the friend of civic nationalism, not its enemy. We cannot know what will emerge in the absence of racial nationalism, but we have reason not only to hope but also to believe that out of the delegitimation of racism and racialism in America there will appear civic ideals different from anything that has come before, ideals capacious enough to gather all of America's groups around a creed fashioned by none of them. ■

The Antiquarian as Hero

By MARC FUMAROLI

Peiresc's Europe: Learning and Virtue in the Seventeenth Century by Peter N. Miller

(Yale University Press, 234 pp., $40)

I.

RECENTLY I CITED the name of Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc in a review for the excellent literary pages of an Italian daily, and I received an anxious fax from the column's editor: "Who the devil is this character?" Were you to make the rounds of the most intelligent European newspapers, you would find all the editors reacting in the same manner. One would have to be a little dotty to cite Peiresc anywhere other than in a very specialized journal. In *The Island of the Day Before*, no less a polymath than Umberto Eco evokes in passing without naming him "a local gentleman from Aix-en-Provence who was versed in every science, possessor of a library rich not only in books but in art objects, antiquities, and embalmed animals," accompanied by his friend "the Canon of Digne," who is also left anonymous.

It would seem that Peter N. Miller, who does not exactly have his eye on the best-seller market, has written a book that is a gigantic footnote, marvelous in its erudition, its intelligence, and its talent, with sixty-four pages of its own succulent notes in tiny characters, to fill in the overly prudent silence of the illustrious semiologist from Bologna. And with the appearance of *Peiresc's Europe*, nobody will any longer have an excuse for wonder at the mention of Peiresc's name. I will freely refer them to this remarkable book.

Anyone who takes an interest in seventeenth-century Europe, in the century of Galileo, Rubens, and Poussin, must read Miller's book with avidity, and find a prominent place for it in his library. The Florentine Galileo, the Antwerp-born and Antwerp-bred Rubens, and Poussin, a Norman installed in Rome, all lived in the same learned and cosmopolitan universe as the two friends from Aix-en-Provence and Digne, Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc (1580–1637) and Pierre Gassendi (1592–1655). (The latter is the "Canon" whom Eco did not name.) The central term in this extraordinary European universe of erudite laymen is "antiquarian." All of these figures were "antiquarians."

Even Galileo—who needed to know the original works of Euclid, Diophantus, Aristotle, Aratos, and other ancient geometers and cosmographers if he was to surpass the science of the Greeks—was an antiquarian. Rubens, Poussin, and Peiresc were experts in old texts, and also in gemstones, medallions, bas-reliefs, and monuments of classical antiquity. They drew from these studies a meticulous knowledge of the mores, the costumes, the actions, the beliefs, and the rites of the distant past. The correspondence between Peiresc and his peers is filled with their excitements and their conjectures regarding the most tenuous testimonies that survived the shipwreck of the ancient civilizations of the Mediterranean and the Middle East, and also with speculations about the analogies between that world and the world of the Gauls, the Celts, and the pre-Colombian Americans.

From Aix-en-Provence, where he was a magistrate in the parliament, Peiresc, the unmarried heir (along with his brother Paleméde de Valavez) of a rich family of the *noblesse de robe*, maintained an intense traffic of daily letters with numerous friends in Paris and in other European capitals who shared all or some of his universal curiosity; and also with hundreds of informers and merchants of "old things" in Europe and the Middle East. In his youth, Peiresc travelled in Italy, and then in England and Holland, and everywhere he went he allied himself with those who mattered for the advancement of scholarship. In 1605, on the occasion of Peiresc's first stay in Paris, Isaac Casaubon, the great Calvinist philologist and curator of the king's library, opened the royal collection for him. The illustrious magistrate Jacques-

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Auguste de Thou, who gathered in his own library the erudite of Paris and those who were passing through town, adopted Peiresc as one of his own. Between 1616 and 1623, Peiresc returned to Paris as the secretary to Guillaume du Vair, the Keeper of the Seals, another magistrate, no less wise or less illustrious than De Thou. But from 1623 until his death, Peiresc did not leave Aix, other than to reach his country house at Belgentier, above Hyères, not far from Toulon. Peiresc's presence in Aix, and his unceasing activity there, made the place into the nerve center of a worldwide communications network, the equivalent of what we would call an Institute of Advanced Studies, of which Peiresc was the mastermind and the patron. As Miller writes,

> In the Peiresc archive we learn of his discovery of the first nebula ever seen, in the constellation Orion, in 1610 while repeating his friend Galileo's observations of the moons of Jupiter (the "Medicean Planets"). Peiresc rediscovered the Great Cameo of France, the so-called *Gemma Tiberiana*, in the Sainte Chapelle in 1620 and then identified many of its figures. He was behind the acquisition, in Smyrna around 1624, of the "Marmor Parium"—one of what came to be called the "Arundel Marbles" due to Peiresc's agent being briefly imprisoned and Lord Arundel's, hot on the trail, having swooped down to spirit them away to London. Peiresc's correspondence contains one of the first, if not *the* first, descriptions by a European, on the basis of a conversation with a traveller recently returned from Persia in 1628, of the trilingual inscription carved at Bisitun on the order of Darius the Great in 518 BCE. To correct sailing maps of the Mediterranean, Peiresc organized a series of eclipse observations whose results could be used to recalculate longitudes. It was in connection with this project that he commissioned from a visiting artist the first mapping of the moon, executed in his home observatory in 1636. Three hundred years later a crater on the moon was named Peirescius in honor of this achievement. We also learn of his love of cats, which did not, however, preclude the occasional barter of kittens for antiquities, as well as his passion for gardening: his orchards contained over twenty species of citron, some dozen kinds of orange, and, astoundingly, sixty types of apple. He grafted olives to make new varieties (including *olives cannellé*!) and bottled the wine of the malvoisie grapes grown on his property which he then gave away to friends and acquaintances. A later seventeenth-century Botanist Royal commemorated this passion in the name of the most ancient phylum of succulents: *Pereskia*.

Pereskia, indeed. In his *Historical and Critical Dictionary*, Pierre Bayle (a Calvinist in exile in Holland from 1687 onwards) described Peiresc as "the Prefect of the Republic of Letters." The Parisian philosophers of the Enlightenment knew Bayle's *Dictionary* by heart, but this did not suffice to restrain the scorn of the "king" Voltaire, and also of Diderot, for Peiresc and his emulators in the eighteenth century. Their Republic of Letters, with its capricious public of worldly and fashionable people, was very different from—it was, indeed, almost the opposite of—the one that Peiresc ruled, for a quarter of a century, as its all but invisible prince.

Portrait of Peiresc by Claude Mellan, 1637

COURTESY YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS

What was this "Republic" in which "the gentleman from Aix-en-Provence" held such a high rank? Was it a community of archaeologists? Not exactly. The cosmopolis of the "antiquarians" of this period was as alien to the noisy coterie of the worldly philosophers of eighteenth-century France as it would have been to the highly specialized international "communities" of scholars of today. Miller's book luminously establishes how it differed, and why. This is an almost hopeless task, of course, for the word "antiquarian" sounds terrible to our ears. It is, for us, a pejorative term. Since the eighteenth century (Miller shows that in fact the bias began much earlier, in Paris under Richelieu) the antiquarian has represented for the enlightened gentleman of Christian birth what the Talmudist has represented for the liberal Jew.

Diderot eagerly assaulted the "pedants" of the Royal Academy of Inscriptions and Medals with epigrams. More famously, there is the pathetic villain in *Middlemarch* whom George Eliot named Casaubon without the least idea of what the librarian of Henry IV was really like. But the very word "antiquarian," attached to the name Casaubon in a dictionary, sufficed to conjure a monster: "A bat of erudition, purveying small explanations about as important as the surplus stock of false antiquities kept in a vendor's bed chamber." This hollow man is exiled from humanity, from progress, from life; he tortures the young and beautiful Dorothea Brooke, who married him believing naïvely in his genius. And Gilbert Osmond, the arid aesthete who captures Isabel Archer in *The Portrait of a Lady*, is still another Casaubon. In this way the great novelists of the nineteenth century sanctioned the prejudices of the *mondains* of the eighteenth century.

To clear away such a mountain of accumulated hostility and misunderstanding, more than one Hercules is required. Miller could not have succeeded alone. Indeed, he was preceded by a giant of classical philology and Italian historiography, Arnaldo Momigliano, who in a famous article in 1955 radically called into question this Parisian and Whig commonplace. A good part of Momigliano's subsequent work was devoted to showing that the "antiquarians" of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were neither maniacal collectors nor narrow specialists, but strong and disciplined minds, philosophically well-equipped

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scholars, who laid the foundations of historical and philological criticism, of the methodical and comparative inquiry into archives, arts, and artifacts. In Momigliano's account, they were nothing less than the inventors of modern philosophical history; and Gibbon, who detested the *bel esprit* side of the Enlightenment, was the heir of these scholars, and he knew it. Now Miller has taken the proper understanding of the phenomenon of antiquarianism a step further. He shows that this large family of European antiquarians in the first half of the seventeenth century included also the inventors of tolerance, and freedom of thought, and natural law, and international law. It is difficult to imagine a more complete reversal of the attitude that had dominated the interpretation of the subject since Voltaire and George Eliot.

I WOULD DARE to suggest a comparison. All things being equal, it could be said that Arnaldo Momigliano rehabilitated the "ancients" of early modern Europe in the same audacious way that Leo Strauss rehabilitated the ancient philosophers, from Plato to Maimonides, who from the eighteenth century onwards were deemed to have been "overtaken" by Hobbes, Descartes, Locke, and their numerous colleagues. To be sure, Momigliano and Strauss worked from completely different perspectives, and their methods, and even their intentions, can seem incompatible. A philologist and a historian of historiography, Momigliano preferred the Enlightenment of Gibbon to that of the French encyclopedists, though he still believed in progress and in enlightenment. Strauss was a political philosopher for whom history was an eternally closed system, more perilous since the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, in which the true heirs of Socrates, if they were to think, to speak, and to live as philosophers, had to play a cautious political game with the church, the state, and public opinion.

Still, Momigliano and Strauss, each in their way, vigorously appealed the Parisian and Whig sentence that condemned the ancients to obsolescence in the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns. Momigliano and Strauss both taught at the University of Chicago, and each had many remarkable disciples. (The school of Momigliano and the school of Strauss also have in common their perfect impermeability to the terrorist "theory" imported from France in the 1960s.) The flourishing of these two giants of historical thought in the United States is difficult to reconcile, perhaps, with the American attitude that was articulated by Bill Clinton in one of his last addresses to the American people: "As long as our dreams for the future are stronger than our attachment to the past, we will remain the first nation in the world." But it does follow in the same vein as Tocqueville, who, in the second part of *Democracy in America*, exhorts the young utilitarian nation to create "excellent universities" where Latin, Greek, and the classics would be taught. The French philosopher-sociologist (a descendant of the antiquarian, if one believes Momigliano; a descendant of Socrates, if one believes Strauss) was convinced that the salt of Plato and Aristotle could become the flavor, the very soul, of modern democracies that are menaced by conformism and philistinism. So what is at stake in the rehabilitation of antiquity and the antiquarians is a bigger thing even than the accuracy of the scholar about the object of his inquiry.

With his book on Peiresc, in which the theses of Momigliano are verified and splendidly deepened, Miller demonstrates that the tradition that the Italian master founded in the United States—and which Anthony Grafton, the formidable author of *Joseph Scaliger* and *Defenders of the Text*, and the American leader of the school of Momigliano, has kept alive with extraordinary authority—is progressing nicely from one generation of American scholars to the next. Like Grafton, Miller bases his research on the most solid works of historical scholarship, and on the recent literature in French, Italian, and German—works that, judging by the productions of "theory" in America in recent years, would seem to have been wiped off the map of Europe since the new Enlightenment of Lacan, Foucault, and Derrida illuminated the two continents. It is significant that the word "virtue" features in Miller's subtitle: it requires nothing less than virtue, a heroic virtue, even after Momigliano and Grafton, to buck the contemporary trend.

Miller's rehabilitation of the antiquarians—of their philosophical philology, of their "art of writing in a time of persecution," of their stoicism in the face of political and religious tyrannies—seems to me to build for the first time, and perhaps unintentionally, a broad bridge between the Straussians and the Momiglianians. On the other hand, Miller makes explicit connections between his enterprise and the school of art history founded at Princeton by Erwin Panofsky, and of which Elizabeth Cropper and Charles Dempsey (whose book *Nicolas Poussin: Friendship and the Love of Painting* is a kind of companion to Miller's book) and Ingrid Rowland are the heirs. I see three powerful rivers of "classical scholarship," until now separate, flowing together in this book by a young American scholar, and all three have their sources in the old Europe of pre-1960. Is Peiresc's Republic of Letters now being re-born in the United States?

II.

BUT WHO, EXACTLY, was Peiresc? Why are his friends Galileo and Rubens so famous, and he so forgotten? The glory of Galileo, in our modern eyes, surpasses even the glory that was enjoyed by Socrates, philosophy's martyr, in the eyes of the ancients. For Galileo is science's martyr. It is to his sacrifice that he owes his glory, not to his philosophy or his philology. Rubens's modern fame, needless to say, is owed to his pictures (and their prices), not to his philosophy or his erudition, which were nonetheless highly esteemed by Peiresc. (And rightly esteemed, because Rubens's paintings presuppose, not only in their iconographical content but also in their synthetic style, a profound study of antique statuary and of the different schools of Italian and Flemish painting from the Renaissance onwards.) Peiresc seems to have had only the slightest tie to Poussin, another great artist of the same period, but he corresponded assiduously with Poussin's Roman patron, the antiquarian Cassiano dal Pozzo. Of course, Poussin's glory was similarly not due to his antiquarianism, nor to the philosophy that he shared with Dal Pozzo. From the beginning of the twentieth century, he has been remembered above all as the precursor of Cézanne. His historical reality is emerging slowly.

Peiresc the antiquarian, the philologist, the polymath, the philosopher, has none of the attributes of these "stars" of the mind. He never published his researches. His collections were dispersed after his death. He was not persecuted. One must look very closely at his biography to understand that his long retirement in Aix-en-Provence, after his brief and brilliant career in Paris alongside Du Vair (where he published his friends' books and passed on official commissions to Rubens), was in part a choice, in part a disgrace. For Richelieu detested the sort of man, such as Du Vair and Peiresc, who had at his disposal a private sphere in which his judgment remained entirely unaffiliated. Tyrants fear philosophers.

Momigliano, fascinated by the "antiquarians" that he had rehabilitated, described them once as "deeply mysterious in their ultimate aims." Is this "mystery" not that of Strauss's cautious philosopher, who must proceed masked and speak a language in which silences say more than the shield-words that he uses to fend off the mighty and the vulgar? Peiresc refused to publish. It was his correspondence that enabled him to speak freely and unofficially with his peers in the secret of friend-

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ship, and with powerful or uncertain interlocutors. Surely this is an example of what Strauss called "persecution and the art of writing."

Miller takes numerous paths toward the secret core of this strange little man, who in spite of his poor health found enough energy to exercise the demanding office of magistrate, to coordinate through his correspondence a number of research programs on a global level, and to conduct a series of inquiries into the most diverse disciplines. Peiresc also found the time and the energy to collect books, manuscripts, and antiques of diverse origins; and also to cultivate in his orchard rare or exotic plants, and to domesticate his favorite animals, cats and songbirds. His home in Aix was a required stop for literate travellers coming from Italy to Paris along the Rhône. An artist of conversation, he knew how to instruct his guests and how to be instructed by them.

What was the motivation for this prodigious and disinterested activity? The inquirer into the mystery of Peiresc has at hand a guide (itself also long forgotten): the delicious Latin biography of Peiresc published in 1641 by his friend "the Canon of Digne," Pierre Gassendi. It is full of "little true facts" that bring this Provençal Socrates to life. Gassendi was himself a scholar and a philosopher who rehabilitated science and Epicurean wisdom. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, his numerous disciples were Descartes's great rivals, and he himself debated with Descartes as an equal. On Peiresc, then, he is a weighty informant.

At Carpentras, in the Inguimbertine Library, not far from the most beautiful rococo synagogue in Europe, Miller was also able to consult Peiresc's enormous mass of manuscripts and correspondence. This "theater of memory" escaped the dissolution of the private museum that Peiresc had created at his home in Aix and in his country house. Miller cites numerous passages from this material. He makes one dream of an anthology of *pensées* and *essais* that would show Peiresc, in his style and in his thought, to be the most faithful follower of Montaigne in the seventeenth century.

Following in Peiresc's footsteps, Miller has read and analyzed the books that were published by Peiresc's closest contemporaries, which can, through comparison with his manuscripts and correspondence, give indirect but certain indications of the mysterious foundation of his thoughts and his goals. In this connection, Miller familiarizes us with the thought of Justus Lipsius, and of Montaigne, and of Du Vair, the three major interpreters of the return, between 1570 and 1610, to what Pierre Hadot has called the "spiritual exercises" of the ancient philosophers. These three Catholic writers, prudent to avoid arousing any suspicion on the part of the authorities of their church, were best-sellers in the original and in translation; and they were also appreciated in Anglican, Calvinist, and Lutheran territories. We reflect, with Miller, on the juridical works and the ecumenical religious ideas of Grotius, one of the men most esteemed by Peiresc, and also on those of the Englishman William Camden, on the Germans Janus Gruter and Martin Opitz, the Italians Girolamo Aleandro and Agostino Mascardi.

Miller magnificently transports his reader into the heart of the cosmopolitan society of scholars of which Peiresc was the model and the leader. He insists on the Stoic character of the ancient philosophy that these thinkers revived. He is right to do so. But he somewhat overlooks the fact that Gassendi, Periresc's most intimate friend, was himself the greatest proponent of a return to Epicurean science and scholarship, with which Montaigne was also imbued. Miller also underestimates the element of skepticism (this has been studied by Richard Popkin) in the thought of these great minds, who were all blessed with a syncretistic genius. There was in Peiresc a strand of Epicureanism and a strand of skepticism, as was already the case with Seneca.

AGAIN, ONE MAY read this story in a Straussian key—especially Miller's fine chapter about Peiresc's politics. It may seem surprising that this model of the disinterested scholar had ulterior political motives; but they were the ulterior political motives of a philosopher. In France, Peiresc and his friends were the heirs of a generation of erudite magistrates who, with Montaigne, had known the horrors of civil war between Protestants and Catholics, and who had succeeded, with Henry IV, in creating a climate of tolerance and in restoring peace. The experience of adversity was also precious, during the massacres and the conflagrations of the Thirty Years' War, for a German philosopher and poet such as Opitz: it taught him to hold fast, and to prepare from afar the conditions for the Treaties of Westphalia. But suddenly Peiresc and his contemporaries faced a new peril in France, in the wake of the death of Henry IV: the intention of Richelieu, from 1624 onwards, to intervene militarily in Europe, in the furtherance of religious wars outside France, so as to settle definitively, and in France's favor, the old conflict with the Spanish and the Austrian Hapsburgs. To intervene with sufficient military force (which he would not be able to do until 1631), Richelieu had to strengthen the state, to neutralize the great princely families, and to subdue the parliaments, which, in principle, had the last word on taxes.

Greatly attached to his parliament of Aix, and to the "liberties and privileges" of his province, Peiresc had his eyes wide open, like his "parliamentary" friends in Paris, to the rising dictatorship of Richelieu. Like them, he was among those in France who knew the political history of the old kingdom and its "ancient constitution," in which a major role was recognized in the conduct of common affairs for the princes and the magistrates, and which left a measure of self-government to the provinces. This "ancient constitution" had shown its virtues during the dramatic period of the vacancy of the throne, between the assassination of Henry II de Valois in 1589 and the consecration of his legitimate and designated heir, Henri de Navarre, in 1594. At that time the magistrates had played the decisive role in the legitimation of Henry IV, the end of the religious wars, and the Edict of Nantes. But that happy moment quickly passed.

Peiresc could compare the evolution of the French regime towards absolutism to what his English correspondents John Selden and William Camden could teach him about the conflict between the absolutist tendencies of King Charles I and the English Parliament, which was much more powerful and representative than the parliament of Paris. The outcomes of these respective conflicts were dramatically different, and Peiresc had foreseen this since the 1630s: in France, the triumph of absolutism, and in England, the triumph of the old attachment to the "ancient constitution" of medieval times, which prevailed over the infringements of the king on Parliament. Peiresc could observe also in Rome the disastrous effects for liberty of the spirit of papal absolutism, which was Richelieu's model and the model of all European absolutisms. He did his best to warn his Roman correspondents, and later to mitigate the stupid verdict against his friend Galileo. But in vain.

Men as independent and as free-thinking as Peiresc were not wanted in the new French system. The reinforcement of the powers of the centralized state had as a corollary in Paris the development of a society at court, subsidized by the king, that preferred luxury, the show of wit, and the excitements of fashion to independent judgment, the practice of historical comparison, and moral courage. The logic of the new regime would allow the *homme du monde*, with his short memory and his brilliant conversation, to prevail over the magistrate and his long memory, who preferred the library to the salon. Peiresc and

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his friends observed this evolution from near and from afar, and they grasped that it boded ill for them and for the freedom of the philosopher. Again, and more than ever, they were called upon to practice the Stoic virtue of *constantia*, or steadfastness. This margin of resistance proved to be as futile in Seneca's as it had been in Nero's time.

Steadfastness improves with practice. Peiresc's life from 1623 until his death in 1637 (six years before Richelieu's) was a long and stirring exercise in steadfastness. Miller enables us to take part in the many extraordinary activities of a great soul, who awaited no reward other than the esteem of a small group of friends. This spiritual greatness was most evident in the practice of what was then called "natural philosophy," which denoted a methodical and encyclopedic inventory of the world. Like his contemporaries Descartes and Bacon, Peiresc was acutely aware that human life is too brief, and the reach of individual reason is too limited, and the variety of the world is too immense, for this universal and comparative speculation—from zoology to anthropology, from botany to astronomy and geography—to be conducted in any manner other than collectively. Peiresc conceived his role as a coordinator of research, with the humble awareness that he was indebted to the inquiries of the ancients, and that after his death the enterprise would be taken up by others.

As for himself, it sufficed that he remain true to one of the two highest ends that Aristotle assigns to the human soul: the appetite for knowledge. It would be hard to imagine a less Faustian spirit. Science for Peiresc, as for Aristotle and the ancients (but not for Descartes and Bacon), was not a utilitarian activity: it was essentially a mode of the contemplative life. It was at once a critical knowledge and an exercise in admiration. From this great methodical inventory of the world, Peiresc drew interior sustenance, which secured him against the despair that could assail him when he beheld the political evolution of France. The cosmopolite and the cosmographer consoled the citizen devoted to liberty.

Romp

We will consider the cheer.
We will lie in the new grass.
We will add ourselves to rain,
The wet path, movements in the grass, the blowing plums.
We will know ephemeral feasts.
Consider the cheer, the warm drink.
We will add ourselves to the dallying
In late sunlight, quickening days.
And I prepare myself for him with my fingers.
A flock provokes us,
The washed wings and a rustle in elders,
Musk in prayer. Prepare myself with fingers,
Prayer. It is insatiable. Wet
Bowers dissolve in gold, shiver as he passes.
The gold grapes shiver,
And the ice-green olives on the little trees.
The cloud approaches, gold
In the garden, licking gold the leaves.
He prepares, I approach him.
Consider the cheer
A medium of exchange:
A taste for consummation,
Congenital and cheered.
We will flock to the elders in the garden.
We will flock to the wet path
And the subtle fruit. The fingers cheer
The hourless hours, ours, and purr the bowels
And the door in thankfulness.
The belly cheer. The welcome drink purrs, dear love,
As poets fill the grass.

Judith Hall

The other end that Aristotle assigned to the soul is happiness. Like human knowledge, human happiness is destined to remain imperfect and unachieved. Only God truly knows, and only God is truly happy. And only religion or philosophy enables one to accept this terrible discrepancy. This acceptance of human finitude is the basis of the small, ephemeral happiness of which man is capable. Peiresc, a cleric, was born a Catholic and was raised by the Jesuits of Avignon and of Tournon. His closest friend was a canon. Every day he said Mass in his private chapel. But was this not the piety of a philosopher? He was an enthusiastic supporter of Grotius, who, imprisoned by his Calvinist co-religionists, had written a book on the truth of Christian religion that finally identified Jesus with Socrates. And the same underlying idea may already be found in Montaigne's essays.

Beyond the dogmas of each church, beyond the particular rites and beliefs that each individual was called upon to uphold, the heart of true piety was the humility of the philosopher, whose activity takes place on the threshold that separates the human from the divine, the mortal from the absolute. This philosophical spirit was also the foundation for mutual tolerance, friendship, and the exercise of reason. The superfluities of superstition divide. Only the essential unites, and re-unites. The *docta et emendata pietas*—the learned and purified piety—of Peiresc has nothing in common with the atheism or the aggressive deism of the French Enlightenment. His *vita contemplativa* is linked, rather, to the "negative path" of the mystics. It feels a communion with all religions, because all religions have a common basis whose secret only the philosopher may discern.

And so an "antiquarian" was much more than an antiquarian. This almost completely forgotten character turns out to have been one of the most noble and enlightened souls of modern times. But how could the narrow practice of resurrecting the past issue in the profound political and religious philosophy that Miller discovers in "the gentleman of Aix-en-Provence"? We can hardly imagine Socrates as an antiquarian! In attacking this problem, Miller is at his best. He shows that ancient philosophy as it was practiced by Peiresc is above all a meditation on the tragic strangeness of human time. Fortune, chance, accident: they rule our brief destinies. All the productions of man, even the most finely conceived ones, are devoured by Time, as are we: *tempus edax rerum*, Time devours all things. Yet, this devouring Saturn has another face. Far from being the accomplice of madness, and cruelty, and man's crimes, Time uncovers them: *veritas filia temporis*, truth is the child of Time. Socrates was unjustly put to death, but his innocence and his wisdom were ultimately, and unanimously, recognized.

The philosopher knows and accepts the two aspects of Time. He does not collaborate with the former, and he is the unconditional ally of the latter. But the two faces of Time teach him fruitful lessons. The first emancipates him from vanity. The second inculcates him with patience, confidence, and hope. Working to restore and

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to understand the fragments of the great shipwreck that is the human past is a way of introducing a little eternity into the flux of time. The past is our double, but we are its shadow. In the work of historical "resurrection" to which he devotes himself, the philosopher-philologist and antiquarian tears himself away from devouring Time and enters redeeming Time. He lends his soul to the dead, but the dead return it to him illuminated. Peiresc was Proustian three centuries before Proust.

He always preferred the modest objects that were unearthed in excavations to the magnificent objects. The least precious ones were for Peiresc the most precious ones. For they had meaning only for the true student of the past, who knew how to recognize their humble and fragile life, a life closer to our own. These old coins, these shards of broken pots, were for the philosopher like the skulls in the paintings of Saint Francis or Mary Magdalene, or like the half-effaced message on the old tomb that is discovered and deciphered by Poussin's Arcadian shepherds: they teach the Socratic instruction to "know thyself."

And now Peiresc's own tomb, after three centuries of oblivion, has been deciphered from the other side of the Atlantic by a new Arcadian shepherd. It is rare to read a book of high and impeccable erudition that resounds with such a musical correspondence, so intense and so right, between a writer and his subject. Peter Miller's book is a masterpiece. ■

—translated by Claire Messud

The Paper Pusher

By ALEXANDER STAR

Double Fold: Libraries and the Assault on Paper by Nicholson Baker

(Random House, 353 pp., $25.95)

IN THE OPENING pages of *The Mezzanine*, his first novel, Nicholson Baker speculates that the world changed suddenly sometime around 1970. He is referring to the unfortunate moment when "all the major straw vendors switched from paper to plastic straws, and we entered that uncomfortable era of the floating straw." How did this come about? Presumably the engineers had supposed that because a plastic straw weighed more than a paper straw, it, too, would rest on the bottom of a can. But the engineers were wrong. They had forgotten that paper straws were more porous than their plastic cousins, and therefore "soaked up a little of the Coke as ballast." As a result of this miscalculation, the "quality of life, through nobody's fault, went down an eighth of a notch, until just last year, I think, when one day I noticed that a plastic straw, made of some subtler polymer, with a colored stripe in it, stood anchored to the bottom of my can!"

This is Nicholson Baker in a nutshell: a squinting attention to the tiniest specifications of everyday life; a half-satirical, half-maniacal expression of outrage; and a certain childish wonder and joy at the way things, in the smallest sense of the term, hold together. In his new book, Baker once again protests the abandonment of paper. This time the scope is larger: he writes as a self-proclaimed "library activist" who has composed a spirited polemic against the errant romance of librarians with technology. Examining the microfilm vogue of past decades, as well as the digitalization boom of today, Baker contends that librarians have too often preferred paper substitutes to the real thing. As a result, they have discarded and destroyed countless books and newspapers and have done irreparable damage to the very artifacts that they are pledged to protect.

A cabal of self-aggrandizing technocrats and philistines has taken the historical record out of circulation and stamped it for destruction. Together with the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Mellon Foundation, the Library of Congress in particular has been responsible for the greatest government-led destruction of books since Henry VIII sacked England's monasteries. And how did this happen? In Baker's view, modern librarians are unaccountably eager to be released from the burden of their possessions. They are mesmerized by the lure of technology and by the ideology of "steady space." Rather than increase the size of their buildings, they have preferred to decrease the size of their books. If microfilm did not exist, they would have had to invent it.

In fact, microfilm was already being used in the 1870s, when it was employed to send military documents by carrier pigeon during the Franco-Prussian War. By the 1930s, it had become a business: the Recordak company promised libraries that it could replace their crumbling newspapers with tidy rows of boxed microfilm. With World War II, the prestige of the technology increased. University Microfilms received a contract from the Office of Strategic Services to photograph German scientific papers. The government also reduced and sorted thousands of old postcards showing images of Bavaria or Berlin. When Allied bombers needed to know what a particular bridge or village looked like, they could consult the archives. In 1956, the microfilm revolution began in earnest when the Ford Foundation helped to organize the Council on Library Resources. A coalition of cold war strategists, library bureaucrats, and photo-emulsion entrepreneurs set out to make the world safe for the technologies of miniaturization.

BAKER HAS A great deal of fun with the "grand old men of microfilm," the patricians and the technocrats who combined an old-fashioned horror of waste with a futurist's enthusiasm for sleek gadgetry. Quite sincerely, they believed that the photographing of written text was as revolutionary an invention as the printing press, and that microfilm rolls would one day be as ubiquitous as eyeglasses or toothbrushes. In the service of this vision, they concocted a number of bizarre schemes that add up to a memorable inventory of technological failure.

Fremont Rider was perhaps the most eccentric of them all. An assistant to the great classifier Melvil Dewey, he later wrote ghoulish poetry, and immersed himself in spiritualism and real estate, and quite possibly suggested the phrase "new deal" to Franklin Roosevelt. As the librarian of Wesleyan University in the 1930s, he went to great lengths to act on his belief that waste is a "venal sin." Enraged by all the white space in wide-margined books, Rider had the books cropped. In *The Book on the Bookshelf*, Henry Petroski adds that Rider was also consumed with making library shelving more efficient. To minimize the empty space on a shelf, he grouped Wesleyan's books by width and shelved them with their bindings facing up.

It was Rider's steadfast belief that library collections were doomed to double in

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size every sixteen years; and he believed that this iron law of increase was nothing less than a "problem ... of civilization itself." His solution to the problem was a variation on microfilm: the Microcard, which would reduce an entire book to tiny lines of script on the back of its own catalog card. By the mid-1950s, some 1,600 microcard readers were in use around the country. But the resolution of the image was not very good; the film stock was damaged by heat; and it was not long before the fad came to an end.

Among Rider's most ardent admirers was Verner Clapp, the first president of the Council on Library Resources. An amateur classicist, Clapp was proud of his old-fashioned erudition; but this did not stop him from complaining that books were "dingy, dreary, dogeared, and dead!" While human beings are thoughtful enough to die and decay, the "world's books have a way of lingering on." The librarian's mission, Clapp maintained, was to extract the "profit and usefulness" from printed volumes while preventing them from "clogging the channels of the present." (It is a sentiment that Emerson or Nietzsche would have understood, though Baker understandably finds it disturbing in a librarian.)

Disdainful of paper, Clapp wished to see little-used books "retired to microtext." Ingeniously enough, he sponsored the exciting idea of combining an automatic page-turning device with closed-circuit television. In this way, patrons at one library could read a book that was located at another library with little need for human assistance. The television-reader went nowhere; but the Library of Congress did spend considerable amounts of money on other dubious gadgets. Deputy Librarian William Welsh promoted the "Optical Disk," a highly efficient substitute for rolls of microfilm. Indeed, he boasted that the disk was so compact that its adoption would allow the Library of Congress to shrink from three large Washington buildings to one. Once again, the technology proved wanting.

THESE EFFORTS ARE amusing failures; but less amusing is the story of microfilm itself. Even in the 1950s, it was clear that microfilm was not very reliable: the color of the original image was lost; the film buckled and snapped; the text was blurry; and often entire pages of an original source were simply absent from the rolls. (In a fit of what Baker calls "redefinitional insanity," the Library of Congress deems a microfilmed newspaper run to be "complete" if "only a few issues per month are missing.") Most important, readers did not like operating the machines. As Baker aptly puts it, reading a newspaper was like "mowing an endless monochromatic lawn." Some terminals even came equipped with airsickness bags. Microfilm, one commentator would later explain, was an "information burial system."

Even so, Clapp and the Council on Library Resources pushed ahead. Libraries, they believed, were eager to free up space on their shelves, and to be relieved of the need to care for old, dusty objects; one advertisement promoted microfilm as a "slum clearance program." The 1970s became the "gilded age of microforming." Before filming, printed volumes were typically sliced apart by an electronic guillotine, so that they could be photographed more rapidly and without any "gutter-shadow" between facing pages. Once disbound, the resulting heap of pages was unlikely to go back into a library collection. At the Library of Congress, entire runs of *The New York Times*, *The New York Herald Tribune*, and *The Chicago Tribune* were thrown away or sold off to dealers, who would cut them up for the satisfaction of memento seekers. Books, too, were re-formatted and retired. Baker estimates that, between 1968 and 1984, the Library of Congress's Preservation Microfilming Office filmed 300,000 volumes and discarded a great number of them.

As the disbinding continued, the motives for microfilming began to shift. Microfilm, it was argued, not only saved space, it would also keep embrittled texts from disappearing. Beginning in the 1870s, newspapers and books had been printed on highly acidic paper made from wood pulp instead of rag pulp, and with time this paper tended to crumble and to curl and to become discolored. In 1957, the Council on Library Resources asked a document laminator named William James Barrow to look into the problem. Barrow promptly devised a "fold test": he would measure the durability of old paper by bending the corner of a page back and forth until it broke.

Barrow believed that the number of bends a page could withstand provided an adequate measure of its expected life. According to his first calculations, some ninety-seven percent of the "non-fiction books printed between 1900 and 1939 will have deteriorated to the point of being useless by the end of the century." Later tests were not quite as dramatic in their results, but even so they seemed to make a self-evident case for "re-formatting," and "the eighties became the decade of the Barrow-inspired statistical-deterioration survey." In 1985, Yale University found that forty-five percent of the library books that it sampled failed the test after four folds and were therefore ripe for replacement.

Baker attacks the fold test with considerable vigor. Obviously enough, the important thing is not how many times you can bend a page, but how many times you can turn it. If Barrow's numbers proved to be egregiously wrong, it may be because he failed to realize that books were not designed for origami. Conducting his own homemade experiment, Baker tried to crease a page of Edmund Gosse's *Questions at Issue*, and found that the corner broke off right away. But when Baker applied his "Turn Endurance Test" to the seemingly embrittled 1893 edition, he found that it survived eight hundred page turnings without any trouble. Barrow's fold test might be appropriate for maps or dollar bills, but why apply it to books?

THE REASON, BAKER believes, is that libraries were eager for a "marketable preservation crisis." By warning of an imminent book disaster, they could win impressively large grants and continue to pursue their favored technological schemes. In the 1980s, the library-industrial complex turned the notion of a "brittle books crisis" into gospel. Warren Haas, the president of the Council on Library Resources, commissioned a report recommending that 3.3 million books be microfilmed within the next twenty years to save them from their own acidity. Since microfilming a book could cost $60, a considerable amount of money would need to be raised.

Fortunately, Haas convinced William Bennett to open an Office of Preservation at the National Endowment for the Humanities. Now the librarians could lobby Congress for the funds to pay for microfilm and other paper rescue operations. At a congressional hearing in 1987, the guardians of the nation's cultural heritage gathered to warn that the brittle books crisis had become a "national emergency." Vartan Gregorian explained that seventy-seven million books faced imminent extinction unless action was taken. Lynne Cheney graphically added that "every day, Dan Boorstin gets 6,000 more bodies brought into the Library of Congress," and announced that the NEH favored "intellectual content" over "the book itself."

Soon after, the producers of the documentary film *Slow Fires* employed the talents of the man who wrote *The Asphalt Jungle* to create "the most successful piece of library propaganda ever." In the film, the chief of conservation at the New York Public Library laments that many books are "so brittle and deteriorated that they simply fall apart in your hands." Baker retorts that this is nonsense: nobody has ever seen an embrittled book actually turn to dust. For Baker, the preservation crisis was essentially a hoax. Brittle books are fragile, but they are not about to disappear. Baker

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even speculates that their acidity might help them to survive in the long run, since it "discourages paper-eating bugs."

Today, of course, microfilm is no longer very popular. And as Baker himself acknowledges, libraries have abandoned the worst excesses of their disbind-and-destroy policy. Many librarians have protested against "slash and burn preservation," and there is some skepticism about the brittle books crisis. The fold test is rarely used. Even so, Baker fears that "a second major wave of book wastage and mutilation" is now beginning. The reason, quite simply, is digitalization. All that was once to be microfilmed will now be scanned. Once again, books are at risk of being disbound and discarded in order to undergo "reformatting" and "platform migration." Everywhere librarians are heeding the "digitarian dog whistle." And this time the threat to libraries is even more acute. Some members of the "scan clan" wonder why libraries need to exist in physical spaces at all.

Baker provides various examples of the digital library in the making. At Cornell, old math textbooks and works of history have been scanned and discarded; the university calculated that the scanning would only be cost-effective if the originals were given away to save shelf space. (The discarding stopped after a faculty member complained.) Baker also raises questions about JSTOR (an acronym for "journal storage"), a Mellon Foundation program that converts scholarly journals into digital files. JSTOR adheres to high standards of quality control; there are no missing pages, and the screen resolution of its scans is excellent. Still, Baker protests that JSTOR is marketed to university libraries as a substitute for, not a supplement to, their print collections. Libraries are advised to move back issues of journals to remote storage locations, or to discard them altogether.

Why is this disturbing? For one thing, digital documents may be far harder to preserve than paper ones. Hardware needs to be replaced, and software programs are continually altered. The maintenance of a large digital database can be extremely expensive. A true archive, as Baker points out, needs to be able to survive protracted periods of neglect and inattention. Can we count on every generation of future librarians to upgrade the relevant hardware and software? Even if the most popular items are safeguarded, many others may simply vanish.

BAKER'S BOOK IS an entertaining and in large part convincing exposé of the misdeeds of librarians. Microfilm certainly failed to live up to its promise, and it may have done more harm than good. And Baker is right to worry about the digital librarians and their dream of a day when the management of databases will replace the maintenance of books. Everywhere libraries are eagerly competing to reinvent themselves as information resource centers. They are cluttering their reading rooms with computer terminals even as their acquisitions budgets decrease. It is not foolish to worry that close reading and idle browsing, as well as actual books, will be squeezed out by all the modems and the power cords.

But Baker sometimes lets his passions get the better of him. Even an ardent bibliophile ought to be able to distinguish between a book guillotine and the other kind. It is also worth acknowledging that even microfilm brought some enlightenment to library users, especially at regional universities lacking large collections. Since he focuses on the fate of paper, Baker's assessment of the digital library is myopic. If digital text poses a greater threat to libraries than microfilm, it is as much because of its virtues as because of its vices. The ease with which text files can be searched and distributed is nothing to sneer at. (The keyword search "unquestionably helps researchers in their truffle hunts," Baker writes.) Unlike microfilm, on-line search engines and databases are quite popular with library users. If libraries are metamorphosing rapidly, it is not due entirely to the machinations of a tiny cabal.

Whatever the fate of a library's paper documents, this metamorphosis raises questions. Does the very abundance of easily accessed information on the Web lead researchers to ignore more-valuable information that is not on the Web? How can digital text be catalogued and preserved when it is constantly being updated and altered? Should libraries grant the same access to their virtual collections as to their actual collections? Right now, libraries are battling the Children's Internet Protection Act, which requires all libraries that receive federal funds to install clumsy filters blocking their patrons' access to pornography websites—and much else besides. Many libraries have refused to install the filters. In turn, a New York state senator is threatening to sue the Brooklyn Public Library for "providing a taxpayer-funded peep show for our kids." It all sounds like something out of a Nicholson Baker novel. (In *The Fermata*, Baker's narrator leaves a sex toy in a library's garbage bin so that he can watch a woman walk away with it.)

Baker does not address any of this. Instead he puts most of his energy into arguing that libraries should acquire more space and preserve more paper. He recommends that some libraries begin retaining current newspapers in bound form. In his estimation, "a century of newsprint" could be sheltered in a Home Depot-sized warehouse. It's a big country, after all; there must be room. He also urges the Library of Congress to keep everything it receives from publishers and the NEH to fund only scanning that is "nondestructive": the original newspapers and books must be kept intact and "saved afterward."

These are sensible ideas. But in arguing so eloquently for the preservation of original sources, Baker leaves open the question of how many original copies of a book or a newspaper must be kept, and by whom. For most libraries, this is the essential question. How tragic is it for a library to discard back issues of a scholarly journal if original copies of the journal are kept elsewhere and the library has access to high-resolution scans of its pages? What is the difference between hastily photocopying an article in a library and printing out a high-resolution image of that article from one's desktop? Should nobody ever discard a bound volume of anything? Baker seems to imply that everything is worth keeping.

NOW THAT BOOKS are rumored to be obsolete, they have attracted new lovers. Historians rightly stress that a book is a meaningful artifact and not simply a disposable container of words. Readers exclaim about the ecstasy of turning the page or using a bookmark. Software firms attempt to secrete digital ink or to reproduce the look of a watermarked page onscreen. The book *is* a marvelous invention, and it may be better to fetishize it than to seek its replacement by multimedia displays and hand-held reading devices. And yet bibliophilia, too, has its vices. It is a form of piety. It is frequently indiscriminate. The appreciation of fine bindings and antique bookplates can become an exercise in preciosity. It is much easier to admire a book's embroidery than to wrestle with its meaning.

Baker is not a snob, though he sometimes poses as one. He can be marvelously attentive to the uses of language in everything from seventeenth-century prose to junk mail. In his eagerness to defend old newsprint or calfskin, however, he sometimes forgets that finally it is the experience of contemplative reading and the availability of valuable information that are most worth safeguarding, not the sheer quantity of paper in the world. Of course, any decision to value one piece of paper more than another may turn out to be mistaken; but this hardly means that such decisions can be avoided altogether.

If all the money spent on microfilm and scanning were used instead to build warehouses of print, librarians would still

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have to make some choices about what to keep and what to discard. The assumption that space is limited is not only an artifact of their stinginess and their aversion to paper. As the linguist Geoffrey Nunberg pointed out in 1993, an increasing number of books are printed every year, and a vast number of them have little obvious intrinsic value: "They are parts catalogs, census reports, Department of Agriculture pamphlets, tide tables, tax codes, repair manuals, telephone directories, airline schedules.... Who would have any reservations about putting texts like these into electronic form, if it will make the world a roomier and greener place?"

Baker would probably have plenty of reservations about this skepticism. The brittle pages of old repair manuals and tide tables are just the sort of things that he savors. Indeed, a reader of his previous books might think that there is nothing at all that he would willingly discard. In *U and I*, his account of an obsession with John Updike, he regrets peeling the price sticker off a pair of clogs: "It is a piece of information I will always want to have." Later, he reflects on a page of Proust "stained with drops of ... suntan oil." Baker imagines "the near transparency that the drops of lotion must have created in the paper as methylparaben portholes in Marcel's prose through which we glimpse for a moment the knowable, verifiable life we have now, in America, with spouses and deck chairs and healing sunlight, as opposed to the unknowable life of a homosexual genius in France before the First World War."

It is this intense effort to extract meaning from even the most ephemeral things, and to turn willfully away from the reality of oblivion, that gives Baker's writing its energy and its wit. But it also renders him incapable of considering what is worth saving and what is not. Oblivion sometimes has its uses. Given that libraries really do encounter more words and more paper than they can handle, this reluctance to make judgments of value is a serious lacuna for a library activist. Sometimes, one imagines and even hopes, ephemera are just ephemera. ■

The Monarch of Dreams

By CALEB CRAIN

The Magnificent Activist: The Writings of Thomas Wentworth Higginson, 1823–1911 edited by Howard N. Meyer

(Da Capo Press, 618 pp., $25)

The Complete Civil War Journal and Selected Letters of Thomas Wentworth Higginson edited by Christopher Looby

(University of Chicago Press, 393 pp., $35)

I.

IN THE SUMMER of 1886, Thomas Wentworth Higginson wrote a peculiar short story. The sixty-two-year-old author ordinarily had no trouble getting into print. He was a widely published and widely respected intellectual, famous for his long-standing support of women's rights and for having led a regiment of freed slaves during the Civil War. But no editor wanted "The Monarch of Dreams." Higginson was attached to the story, and he paid to have it printed privately. When his family read it, they became alarmed, and even today it is not hard to see why.

"The Monarch of Dreams" begins innocently enough. A young man named Francis Ayrault rents an isolated farmhouse in the New England hills, where he has come to recuperate. "A series of domestic cares and watchings had almost broken him down," Higginson explains; "nothing debilitates a man of strong nature like the too prolonged and exclusive exercise of the habit of sympathy." Since Ayrault is fleeing from "a Rhode Island seaside town," Higginson's relatives must have suspected that Ayrault was a proxy for Higginson himself, who had spent thirteen years in Newport nursing his chronically ill first wife—an interval so painful that he chose to omit it from his autobiography.

But recuperation is not Ayrault's only motive. The secluded farmhouse also suits him as the site for a psychological experiment that he is planning. Ayrault hopes to become "the ruler of his own dreams," to control what happens in his mind while he is asleep. It is an odd ambition, and the narrator attributes it to "a certain taste for the ideal side of existence" among citizens of Rhode Island.

On his first night in his new home, Ayrault meditates on a photograph of Mont-Saint-Michel. When he falls asleep, he dreams that he is clinging to a steep, grassy hillside. The next night, he succeeds in dreaming himself back to the same slope (the continuity of his dreams is one of his goals), and he sees other people clinging to it, too. But during his waking hours the next day Ayrault plays with his younger sister, and that night he discovers, to his chagrin, that human contact dissipates his control over his dreams. For the next few days, he isolates himself so as to return to his dream site, whose terrain now rotates ninety degrees, from hillside to plain. He finds also that he can control where sunbeams fall. His sunbeams give joy to the people they hit, but the pleasure of the dream people leaves Ayrault indifferent. "There was a certain hardness in his state of mind toward them," Higginson writes. "The sole thing which disturbed him was that they sometimes grew a little dim, as if they might vanish and leave him unaccompanied."

A few nights later, Ayrault's dream changes again. The plain gives way to "a vast building," where "all was for him." All the books in the building's libraries, all the paintings in its galleries, and all the laws in its legislative chambers are his creations or have been selected to please his taste. The building's occupants also exist only to serve him: "There were always menials and subordinates about him, never an equal." This is unpleasant; and Ayrault becomes lonely. Then he notices, to his horror, that the menials are beginning to resemble him.

Like John Malkovich after entering his own portal in *Being John Malkovich*, Ayrault finds himself surrounded each night by "a whole world of innumerable and uncontrollable beings, every one of whom was Francis Ayrault." Ayrault drifts out of touch with the outside world. When his sister reports nightmares that sound eerily like his own, he sends her away. He promises to speak at a strike meeting in a

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CALEB CRAIN's book, *American Sympathy: Men, Friendship, and Literature in the New Nation*, will be published next month by Yale University Press.

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nearby village, but he forgets to do so. He offers to check up on a young French runaway, but he doesn't follow through.

Then the Civil War breaks out. Ayrault has a chance to enlist as an officer, and it seems, briefly, as if he might be able to break the spell. "He felt himself a changed being," Higginson writes; "he was as if floating in air, and ready to swim off to some new planet." In the preface to *Harvard Memorial Biographies*, a two-volume commemoration of Harvard students and alumni who died in the war, Higginson recalled his own first day in uniform in similar language: "The transformation seemed as perfect as if, by some suddenly revealed process, one had learned to swim in air, and were striking out for some new planet."

In Ayrault's case, however, the change does not take. New recruits are supposed to report to the local railroad station at daybreak. Yet when Ayrault lies down at midnight to rest for a few hours, his dream selves, which have multiplied and shrunk to the size of pinheads, swarm over him: "Ayrault was beset, encircled, overwhelmed; he was in a manner lost in the crowd of himself." He oversleeps and misses his train, whose faint echo he can almost hear, "bearing the lost opportunity of his life away—away—away."

HIGGINSON APOLOGIZED FOR upsetting his relatives, but he defended his short story. "It is the first strong bit of purely imaginative work I ever did," he wrote to them. The assessment is a fair one. The intricacy of Ayrault's psychopathology is worthy of Hawthorne, though Hawthorne would probably have slipped even further into Ayrault's nightmare palace than Higginson did. "The Monarch of Dreams" is one of the most forceful things that Higginson ever wrote. It ends before the reader is ready for it to end—a rarity with Higginson—but the abrupt end was probably the point: Ayrault misses the chance of a lifetime by indulging in narcissistic paraliterary fantasy.

This was not the case for his creator. At the late age of thirty-nine, Higginson caught the train—or boat, in his case—to the Civil War, and he was "Colonel Higginson" ever after. Anxious relatives notwithstanding, "The Monarch of Dreams" did not signal an imminent nervous breakdown, or even a major shift in Higginson's life or writing. Although he called it a "first," it seems to have been his last work of fiction. It did not interrupt his production of book reviews, deliberately cheerful memoirs, articles of popular history, and essays promoting progressive politics, which continued for another quarter-century.

"The Monarch of Dreams" was, in fact, a confirmation of Higginson's life as he had lived it. It reassured him that he had been right to subordinate his literary career to his political activism. And yet Higginson would not have written "The Monarch of Dreams" unless he had remained ambivalent about this decision, even into his seventh decade. In his short story, to indulge in fantasy is selfish, irresponsible, and horrifying. A young person burdened with this prejudice would not have felt at moral liberty to choose art over politics. Though he seems to have been strongly tempted, Higginson was not selfish enough to become an artist.

He was, instead, a good man. A sustained act of will committed a dreamy, passive nature to an active life. Late in life, Higginson hedged on the issue of black voting rights and condemned Walt Whitman and Oscar Wilde as unmanly; but those were aberrations of old age. In his prime, Higginson was on the right side of every important question, when it was difficult to take that side. He campaigned passionately for abolition, women's rights, and civil service reform. He also encouraged exercise, disapproved of tobacco and alcohol, and advocated school reform. But he was not a prude: when it emerged that Grover Cleveland had fathered an illegitimate child, Higginson advised voters to consider the candidate's public virtues rather than his private morals.

In his introduction to *The Magnificent Activist*, his comprehensive new anthology of Higginson's nonfiction, the biographer Howard N. Meyer claims that "Higginson's writing was a tool of his activism, but did not dominate it and was not corrupted by it or prostituted to it." There is certainly no corruption or prostitution in Higginson's writing; Meyer protests too much. But activism did dominate Higginson's literary career. Activism in itself was probably not what weakened his style. (After all, Thoreau's political writing is among his best work.) Still, it is hard to shake the suspicion that Higginson took up reform as a compromise or a compensation. Anyone who undertakes to read *The Magnificent Activist* "for the sheer joy of the reading itself," as Meyer recommends, faces a dish of fairly cold oatmeal. Although he remains important to historians of abolition and feminism, the only literary claim that Higginson has on our interest today is as a liminal case, or perhaps a cautionary tale.

II.

TWO NATURAL AFFINITIES inclined Higginson to a dreamy life, and he felt that he had to oppose both of them. The first affinity was to Transcendentalism, which he liked to call "the Newness." In 1838, Emerson had commanded the graduating class of Harvard Divinity School to "cast behind you all conformity" and adopt the remedy of "first, soul, and second, soul, and evermore, soul." As Higginson recalled in his autobiography, *Cheerful Yesterdays*, by the time he studied at Harvard in the mid-1840s the "wave of liberal thought" that Emerson had launched "was rapidly submerging the old landmarks." In that era, the plight of a Harvard-trained Unitarian minister was a little like that of an English professor today: a sense of mission lingered, but one was no longer required to have faith in anything more particular than one's own career. The looseness, and Emerson's example, left many seminarians restless.

By Emerson's lights, restlessness was itself a desideratum. There was no need to compromise it by choosing something to be restless about. In his lecture "The Transcendentalist," he argued that the new young idealists might appear antisocial or just plain lazy, but there was nobility in their refusal to engage. "Each 'Cause,' as it is called,—say Abolition, Temperance, say Calvinism, or Unitarianism,—becomes speedily a little shop, where the article, let it have been at first never so subtle and ethereal, is now made up into portable and convenient cakes, and retailed in small quantities to suit purchasers." Emerson knew the older, responsible generation's reproach: "Whilst you wait, you grow old and useless." But he preferred the principled slacker's reply: "Be it so...."

Emerson, in other words, was willing to bet that people like Francis Ayrault would pull through in the end. Higginson was not so optimistic. More than half a generation younger than Emerson, he saw around him lives that Transcendentalism seemed to have wrecked. As he recalled much later, in 1904:

> The freedom ... made some men indolent.... Others led lives morally wasted, whether by the mere cutting loose of a surge of passion ill restrained, or by that terrible impulse of curiosity which causes more than half the sins of each growing generation.... I can think of men among those bred in that period, and seemingly under its full influence, who longed to know the worst of life and knew it, and paid dearly for their knowledge; and their kindred paid more dearly still. Others might be named who, without ever yielding ... to a single sensual or worldly sin, yet developed temperaments so absolutely wayward that it became necessary ... for their wives and children to leave them and stay apart.

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Higginson was too genteel to name names, but he was probably thinking here of Thoreau's friend Ellery Channing, the poet whose daughter Margaret was largely raised by Higginson and his first wife.

Higginson saw Transcendentalism as not unlike Francis Ayrault's desire to control his dreams—a destructive idealism, a romantic experiment that turned out to be dangerous. It was to supply the moral urgency that the ministry lacked that Higginson turned instead to social reform. In 1847, while auditioning for pulpits, he even preached a trial sermon on the topic, included in Meyer's book. In "The Clergy and Reform," Higginson reproached churchmen for lagging behind laypeople in progressive causes. "Thenceforth," he warned, "a clergy which suffers any new thought to originate elsewhere, which permits any true Reform to lead it instead of itself taking the lead—hath the mischief in itself and is condemned already!"

FOR A JOB SEEKER, the sermon was daring. It was praised by Theodore Parker, whose deism had rendered him a pariah even among Boston Unitarians, and Higginson was soon well known as a promising radical. As he told his mother, "Like Byron I have waked up & found myself famous." Amazingly, he was even hired by a congregation in Newburyport, Massachusetts.

The job did not last. In abridged form, Meyer prints the Newburyport sermon of which Higginson was most proud. He delivered it on Thanksgiving 1848, shortly after most of his parishioners had voted for the Whig presidential candidate, the slaveholder and Mexican War hero Zachary Taylor. From the pulpit, Higginson berated the men and women who paid his salary for caring more about a tariff to protect Northern industry than about the millions living in slavery. "I cannot congratulate you on the reunion of families and the return of happy associates," he preached, "without thinking of the very many families (of darker hue but light enough souls) to whom it brings no gleam of joy... because of the coalition you have just effected with their oppressor." The congregants were offended. And they were hardly pleased when Higginson was nominated by the Free-Soilers for a seat in Congress, when he invited the heretical Parker to give a guest sermon, or when he circulated a clemency petition on behalf of a black Massachusetts man convicted of murdering his parents. Within two years, the new minister was forced to resign.

"My (masculine) supporters," Higginson explained to his mother, "are in a numerical minority." In other words, the women liked him—and they liked him despite, or perhaps because of, his insistence on reform. This is fitting, because the second affinity that Higginson deeply felt, and deeply resisted, was to women.

In *The Feminization of American Culture*, Ann Douglas described the uneasy alliance between ministers and women during the early nineteenth century. Both groups lost prestige and socio-economic power as the country industrialized, and business elevated secular concerns and slighted domestic ones. Both resorted to sentimentality for solace, and both found that moral suasion was almost the only tone of voice in which they could address the culture at large.

The shared plight of women and clergymen led to a change in America's literary culture. The women in the pews read magazines, and as magazines began to respond to women's interests, their circulation burgeoned. In their pages, the conservative and practical mores of businessmen could be set to one side, and reform and sentiment could be cultivated. When the recently unemployed Higginson chose to write for periodicals rather than seek a new congregation, he was taking part in a broad intellectual movement: the migration of the Unitarian reformist conscience into opinion journalism. Female readers made the migration possible; but since women could be writers as well as readers, their relation to belletristic ministers was at times competitive. And many wondered whether the new vocation of writing for women tarnished the clergy's manliness.

Higginson returned to the pulpit between 1852 and 1857, when he served as pastor of the brand new, hotly abolitionist Free Church of Worcester, Massachusetts. But he accepted the call because he knew that the radical congregation would support his development as a lecturer, an activist, and a writer. He no longer thought of himself as a minister. Struggling with religious doubt, in 1855 and 1856 he wrote an essay called "The Sympathy of Religions," which argued that faith should be a light, not an anchor, to souls at sea. So broad was the essay's ecumenical spirit that it seemed Higginson could even have dispensed with Christ, and certainly with Christians. In Worcester his literary career grew more and more secular—and more and more involved with women's concerns.

It was an intimacy that Higginson found congenial. As a boy, he had been the youngest child in a predominantly female household, and one of his favorite books had been *The Frugal American Housewife*, a homemaker's manual by the novelist and abolitionist Lydia Maria Child. His support of women's rights was early and fervent. He challenged Emerson to allow women into his Town and Country Club, and in 1853 he conspired with Susan B. Anthony and Lucy Stone to lead a feminist secession from the World Temperance Convention, which had barred women from its executive committees.

Higginson found it so easy to identify with a woman's point of view that his *Putnam's Monthly* account of scaling Thoreau's Mount Katahdin in 1856 was written "in the assumed character of a lady of the party." For fourteen years he edited and wrote for the *Woman's Journal*, the weekly newspaper of the American Woman Suffrage Association. He once wrote in his diary that a projected "Intellectual History of Woman" would be "my *magnum opus*, if I can really ever get to it." He never did, but before his death he donated to the Boston Public Library nearly a thousand books on the subject, which he dubbed the Galatea Collection.

HIGGINSON'S PROFESSIONAL involvement with the female sex was rewarding, but for many years his personal experience was not. A special poison sometimes accumulates in people shut out from power if they do not find a useful object for their anger. Higginson became intimate with the form that this poison sometimes took in nineteenth-century women, because he married someone as bitter as she was intelligent.

When he was just out of college, Higginson greatly admired his cousin Mary Elizabeth Channing, though he had already described her in his diary as having "a seeming want of softness but a fine heart," and they married a week after his Newburyport ordination. It was not a happy match. Wentworth (like Emerson, Thoreau, and Fuller, he preferred to be called by his middle name) wanted children, but Mary did not like to be around them. Like Emerson's second wife, Mary was a caustic critic whose frustrations told in her own person. She suffered from neuralgia, chills, colds, strained eyes, rheumatism, and steadily worsening paralysis. In a well-researched biography that appeared in 1968, Tilden Edelstein reported this description by a visitor to the Higginson household in 1860: "Mrs. Higginson is very queer, a great invalid from rheumatism, a perfect mistress of the art of abuse, in which she indulges frequently with peculiar zest & enthusiasm."

Wentworth admired the wit of his wife's disparagements, which he relayed to friends and family in letters. Her health seems to have waned as her husband's fame waxed, and she was touchy about it. "I didn't mean to insult you dear by thinking you better," Wentworth apologized to her in 1863, "but you seemed so." Her

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father and her brother-in-law were doctors, but she turned instead to nonstandard treatments, including homeopathy, wet sheets, animal magnetism, electricity, and the water cure. Her husband became her attendant and nurse.

Mary's illness seems to have obeyed an angry logic: if society rewarded a woman's passivity and weakness, then she would earn through illness what her ambition could not procure. The example of feminists such as Stone and Anthony showed that in fact femininity did not have to be equated with passivity, but Mary was unable to follow their lead. In much that Higginson wrote during the early years of his marriage, he seems to have been addressing his wife's health obliquely. In "Saints and Their Bodies," his first essay for *The Atlantic Monthly*—an article whose "éclat ... made it practically, in my case, the beginning of a literary life"—he attacked the "impression that physical vigor and spiritual sanctity are incompatible." Preachers, artists, and writers ought to treat their bodies with respect, he insisted, because "physical health is a necessary condition of all permanent success," including virtue. He recommended exercise: gymnastics, boxing, sailing, rowing, and especially swimming.

He was pleading for a re-definition of saintliness, for a goodness that could be active and strong. Meyer includes in his volume Higginson's attack on tobacco; and other articles, not re-printed by Meyer, addressed diet, proper ventilation, the relation between health and civilization, and the importance of recess and vacations for children. "When an invalid once begins to enjoy the contemplation of his own woes," Higginson wrote, "it is all over with him." Was he advising his wife, or warning himself not to follow her example? Perhaps prophylactically, he set himself an austere physical regimen. During a trip to the Azores in 1855, undertaken for Mary's health (which did not improve), every morning he asked the sailors to pour seawater on him as he stood on deck in his underwear. At age fifty, after decades of exercise, he reported in his diary that he could climb to the top of a rope in the gymnasium using only his arms, a feat that no other man his age could match. He pursued health as punishingly as Mary pursued illness. Like other radical abolitionists, he was training for war.

III.

"EVER SINCE THE rendition of Anthony Burns, in Boston, I have been looking for *men*. I have found them in Kanzas," Higginson wrote in 1856, in a series of letters to the *New York Tribune* that described his gun-running mission to the territory where Free-Soilers and pro-slavery men were killing one another. The slavery question was urgent to Higginson on purely moral grounds, but he plunged into militant abolitionism with a sense of relief that was highly personal. Here was an alternative to Transcendental detachment and feminine passivity. Here was a reason to act as a man.

Good behavior, often associated with femininity and confused with passivity, could now be thrust aside. The Compromise of 1850, which required Northern states to return runaway slaves to their Southern owners, justified outlawry. In 1851, Higginson plotted with fellow vigilantes to spring the fugitive slave Thomas Sims from the Boston courthouse, without success. While in Worcester, he assisted the Underground Railroad. In 1854, when the fugitive slave Anthony Burns was arrested, Higginson bought a dozen axes and led an attack that broke down the Boston courthouse door with a battering ram. In the confusion a policeman was stabbed, and the rescue failed. But Higginson was undaunted.

In 1856, traveling under an alias, he ran guns to Bleeding Kansas, where the settlers' right to decide whether or not the new state would permit slavery had led to guerrilla war. In 1858 and 1859, he raised funds for John Brown, whom he described as "a high-minded, unselfish, belated Covenanter." Though he was somewhat disingenuous later about what he knew and when he knew it, he proved to be stauncher than most of Brown's other close supporters. He was the only one not to flee the country or check into a psychiatric hospital in the aftermath of Harpers Ferry.

"Amid the changes of time, the monotony of events, and the injustice of mankind," Higginson wrote in one of his essays on physical culture, "there is always accessible to the poorest this one draught of enjoyment,—danger." It is not hard to imagine why risk appealed to Higginson. Waiting at home were a sickly, querulous wife and a profession he scarcely believed in. Conventional virtue had lost its charms. "It is ... strange," he wrote in his diary, "to find one's self outside of established institutions; to be obliged to lower one's voice and conceal one's purposes; to see law and order, police and military, on the wrong side, and find good citizenship a sin and bad citizenship a duty."

In *The Atlantic Monthly* he published chronicles of slave revolts, including those of Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey, and Nat Turner. In "The Maroons of Surinam," he described Captain John Gabriel Stedman's unsuccessful campaign to suppress rebel blacks in Suriname, and he was sympathetic to Stedman's sexual attraction to, and moral curiosity about, the people whom he was supposed to subdue. "Stedman was struck," Higginson wrote, "with the difference between the meaning of the word 'good' in rebellious circles and in reputable." Virtue, among the Maroons, was martial rather than polite.

When Fort Sumter was fired on, however, Higginson did not immediately enlist. In "A Letter to a Young Contributor," published in April 1862, he advised aspiring *Atlantic Monthly* authors not to rush off to war: "Be not misled by the excitements of the moment into overrating the charms of military life.... Never fancy for a moment that you have discovered any grander or manlier life than you should have been leading every day at home." General Wolfe, he observed, died at Quebec wishing that he had written Gray's "Elegy." In other words, stay home and write. Four months later Higginson raised a company of white volunteers, and three months after that came the invitation to lead a troop of blacks. "I shld. hv. missed the best fortune of my life had I not come," Higginson wrote to his mother. He had declined to take his own advice.

AMONG THOSE WHO did take it was an Amherst poet in her early thirties named Emily Dickinson. "Are you too deeply occupied to say if my Verse is alive?" Dickinson's first letter to Higginson asked. Her self-deprecation reads today as a sly dig, as if she foresaw that whatever occupied him would matter much less to later generations than her request. And it may have been a dig. After all, the following winter she made light of the danger he ran as a Civil War colonel: "I trust the 'Procession of Flowers' was not a premonition," she wrote, turning the title of his latest nature essay into a funereal joke.

Higginson was indeed deeply occupied, but he found time to reply to Dickinson, and the good deed has not gone unpunished. Today he is more famous for failing to appreciate Dickinson, discouraging her from publication, and regularizing her verse than for any of his achievements. Of the first charge he is probably innocent. In 1891, he recalled that when he read the poems enclosed with Dickinson's first letter, he had "the impression of a wholly new and original poetic genius." He never wrote to her as often as she would have liked, but the excuse that he gave her in 1869 sounds honest: "I ... feel always timid lest what I *write* should be badly aimed & miss that fine edge of thought which you bear. It would be so easy, I fear, to miss you." He understood that she was beyond him. "The bee himself did not evade the schoolboy more than she evaded

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me," he admitted after her death; "and even at this day I still stand somewhat bewildered, like the boy."

As for tidying up Dickinson's style, he is probably less guilty than has been alleged. "I tried a little—a very little—to lead her in the direction of rules and traditions," he remembered in 1891, "but ... she interested me more in her—so to speak—unregenerate condition." Higginson was a magazine writer, inured to heavy editing, which probably improved his prose (though he resented William Dean Howells's re-writes at the *Atlantic* enough to move to *Scribner's Monthly* in the 1870s). But as Anna Mary Wells pointed out in her lively biography of Higginson, which appeared in 1963, he defended many of Dickinson's unusual word choices to Mabel Loomis Todd, who co-edited with him the first two posthumous volumes of Dickinson's poetry.

But Todd usually overruled Higginson. She was the Dickinsons' neighbor, and he was under the misapprehension that she had the family's unanimous support. He also seems to have been unaware that Todd had heavily revised Dickinson's verse when making the copies that she gave him. After the first collection was a success, Higginson urged her to edit more lightly: "Let us alter as little as possible now that the public ear is opened."

Did he dissuade Dickinson from publishing? He did. "I smile," she wrote to him, "when you suggest that I delay 'to publish'—that being foreign to my thought, as Firmament to Fin—." But even for this misdeed it may not be altogether fair to blame Higginson. It may be what she wanted from him. He was known for his support of young women writers; he was a mentor to Helen Hunt Jackson and Charlotte Hawes. Why would he have nurtured them and stifled Dickinson? According to her own testimony, she felt that he supported her. Twice, at an interval of ten years, she told him that he had "saved my Life."

For his part, he recalled his "not yets" as something she relied on—or prompted—him to say. "Sometimes," he wrote in 1891, "her verses found too much favor for her comfort, and ... I was sometimes put forward as a defense." If she had wanted fame, he probably could not have resisted her, even if he had been spiteful enough to try. "I never was with any one who drained my nerve power so much," he wrote of his 1870 visit to her. "Without touching her, she drew from me." She could have chosen much worse. He saved her letters. In the end he saw her poems into print, and the scholars have long since indignantly undone whatever muddle he made. Without Higginson's reportage, we would not have her famous definition: "If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know *that* is poetry.... Is there any other way?"

IV.

REPORTING IS THE strength of *Army Life in a Black Regiment*, Higginson's most famous book. It was reprinted in the 1960s, when the civil rights movement renovated the interest of historians in the Civil War and Reconstruction. Meyer edited one of the versions still in print, and three chapters appear in *The Magnificent Activist*. Thanks to *The Complete Civil War Journal and Selected Letters of Thomas Wentworth Higginson*, an impressively researched and skillfully organized edition by Christopher Looby, we also have the raw material that Higginson drew on.

Raw, in Higginson's case, is a relative term. In his essay on Stedman, Higginson wrote that in the rainforest the captain had "fortified himself against hopeless despair with Ovid and Valerius Flaccus, Pope's Homer and Thomson's 'Seasons.'" Higginson fortified himself no less learnedly but somewhat less classically, even in his rough drafts. Here is his description of confiscated sheep: "Mr Obadiah Oldbuck, when he decided to adopt a pastoral life and assumed the provisional name of Thyrsis, never looked upon his flocks & herds with more unalloyed contentment than I on my flock of sheep." As a footnote by Looby explains, the allusion is to a fairly obscure American novel. Unfortunately, it tells the reader nothing about the sheep, and about Higginson himself it reveals only that he was a bit of a showoff and liked to sound clubby.

Beneath the ornamentation, however, *Army Life in a Black Regiment* holds facts. Until the capture of South Carolina's Sea Islands by the Union in 1861, the black field hands there had been living in greater isolation and under poorer conditions than slaves on the mainland, and Higginson records their folkways in detail. He notes their distinctive dialect: they call whites "buckras," and they refer to women and men alike as "he." When Higginson sets the word "Fredericksburg" as a countersign, they change it to "Crockeryware." He transcribes the lyrics of their "shouts," or spirituals, sung nightly around fires in huts.

Higginson also has an eye for the human drama of emancipation, such as the reunion of a black corporal with the woman who used to own him. "Ah," the former mistress observes, when Higginson introduces Corporal Robert Sutton, "*we* called him Bob!" After this comment, Sutton gives Higginson a tour of the slave jail on her plantation. But even when his vignettes are pointed, Higginson's style is quaint and glassy. Allusions to minstrel shows and the novels of Harriet Beecher Stowe obscure the blacks' personalities. Fondly, condescendingly, and repeatedly, he compares them to children: "the dear blundering dusky darlings," he writes in his diary.

Whites do not come into much sharper focus. Lieutenant Colonel Charles T. "Scroby" Trowbridge was with the black troops before Higginson and remained with them after. "Scroby has been all things," Higginson writes, "from Bowery boy to Methodist class leader," and one senses that Trowbridge had charisma. But in Higginson's pages he never quite comes alive. In *Army Life in a Black Regiment*, only the author himself has complexity and depth. Indeed, at several points in his diary Higginson admits that he is strangely indifferent to the individual fates of his soldiers. "The death of a man does not seem to affect my sensibilities in the slightest degree," he writes; "it does not *reach* me." Like Francis Ayrault with his dreams, Colonel Higginson controls the fate of everyone in the landscape around him, but he sees them, and cares about them, only hazily.

At his worst, Higginson seems guilty of caring more about appearances than about men, rather like Melville's chilly Captain Vere, who praised "forms, measured forms" and hanged Billy Budd. When Higginson refers to a fellow officer as "a martinet & a moralist," he intends it as a compliment. Being a good disciplinarian, he explains to his mother, is "three quarters of a Colonel." And more unsettlingly, where Vere enjoyed the white, girlish beauty of Billy Budd, Higginson's "gymnasium-trained eye" appreciates with a similar hint of eros the "splendid muscular development" of his African American troops, lauding their "jet-black, or rather, I should say, *wine-black*" complexions. "The strongest men in my regiment," writes Higginson, "have arms which would make the fortune of an English belle, in all but color, round & satiny, without a trace of hair."

Yet Vere's obsession with form served reactionary ends, and Higginson's formalism had a revolutionary purpose. It was not difficult to train former slaves to obey white officers; but it was hard to teach them to obey black ones, and to respect themselves. Higginson insisted on protocol to show that military authority, unlike the racial authority to which the freedmen were accustomed, was deliberately artificial: "We impressed it upon them that they did not obey their officers because they were white, but because they were their officers." The black soldier who responded to an insult by pointing to his

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chevrons and declaring "Dat mean *Guvment*" had understood Higginson's lesson that respect was due to a uniform, not to a skin color.

How, then, to explain Higginson's interest in skin color? With a scholar's tact, Looby is chary of interpretation in his edition of Higginson's diary, but elsewhere he has speculated about what he calls Higginson's "proto-Mapplethorpean" tendencies. Looby refuses—rightly, I think—to demonize the colonel's sexual response. "Higginson," Looby writes, "shows us how political solidarity across racial boundaries may be grounded in an erotics of race." Still, I am not sure that Higginson's admiration of black bodies—and his perplexity about his own white one—stem from desires quite as self-aware as Mapplethorpe's.

Consider, for example, the most revealing chapter in *Army Life*. Late at night, alone, Higginson strips naked and swims a channel that separates his camp from a neighboring Confederate one. Midstream, he is exhilarated by the freedom and the danger of his adventure, then embarrassed by a "feeling of turgescence and congestion" in his head. After spying on the enemy's sentinels, he swims underwater. He surfaces, disoriented. He panics briefly, but at last he reaches the Union shore, somewhat downstream from where he left it. Challenged by a black guard, he rises "at full length out of the shallow water, to show myself a man and a brother." With this phrase, Higginson alludes to a famous abolitionist emblem—a kneeling slave in manacles who asks, "Am I not a man and a brother?"—but he is also indicating that the guard could see his sex.

In other words, he is identifying with the freedman while flashing him. The scene is provocative, but my hunch is that recognition is as much as Higginson wanted from the black guard. The swim itself is what he was after: the disembodied floating, the diffuse ecstasy, the awkward largeness of his head, the exemption from affiliation, the suspension between two camps. Higginson was symbolically returning to the womb, to be re-born as a man.

I say to be re-born as a man because, as it turned out, the army had not quite made him one. While still in Worcester, the all-male dancing of his white soldiers had suggested to Higginson "the felicity of Adam before Eve appeared." In this paradise, however, Higginson himself turned out to be the effeminate serpent. As a leader, he inclined toward a maternal fastidiousness. He joked self-consciously that "military life becomes millinery life" when commanders are too finicky about costume and ritual. But he admitted in his diary that "I like to perfect details always and fuss over my Camp as I used to do over a vase of flowers or an *Atlantic* article."

He was nice rather than decisive. On his third expedition with the First South Carolina Volunteers, Higginson was supposed to blow up a bridge on the Edisto, but he lost time, a tugboat, four men, and two twelve-pound guns by pausing to rescue escaping slaves instead of speeding upriver. When his ship came under artillery fire on the way back to camp, he was grazed by a "piece of wood or . . . spent shell," which left behind it a bruise and the scent of death. A week later, another white colonel of black troops, the younger and more dashing Robert Gould Shaw, was shot down and buried in a trench with his black soldiers. Shaw became a martyr.

Higginson must have envied Shaw's glory. He almost never wrote about the younger man without repeating an unflattering anecdote about a conversation in which Shaw had speculated that if black soldiers proved reluctant to fight, they could be forced into battle by stationing whites to fire on them from the rear. And Higginson found it hard to face his own less-than-glorious survival. Although his bruise appeared to the doctors to be no more than a bruise, he became an invalid. His symptoms were ambiguous. "Nobody can find anything but 'General Debility,'" he told his mother. Charlotte Forten wrote in her journal that Higginson was "not really ill, but very much reduced in strength." After a three-week furlough in Worcester, he returned to South Carolina, again became ill (from malaria, he now believed), and in the end accepted a six-month sick leave, which became indefinite. As he explained to the wife whose fate he now feared he would share, "I can understand a gradual sliding into slippers & dressing gown, far better than formerly."

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First South Carolina Volunteers on dress parade, January 1, 1863, assembled to hear the reading of the Emancipation Proclamation

He joined Mary in Newport, where she had moved, against his wishes, to be near relatives. Her illness soon trumped his. Toward the end they would quarrel fiercely about whether to open or to close the bedroom window at night. In her last year he would take to clipping newspaper articles about "Crimes Against Women" and stashing them in an issue of the *Edinburgh Review*.

V.

With slavery abolished, Higginson looked to new causes and new interests to reprieve him from nursing duty. In 1865, he convinced Newport's school committee to integrate the public schools. Later in the decade he became deeply involved in the movement for women's suffrage, then feuding over the Fifteenth Amendment. If Wells guesses right, he also managed to have an affair with the poet and novelist Helen Hunt Jackson.

And he wrote, prolifically. He edited two volumes of obituaries of Harvard's Civil War dead. He revised a classic translation of Epictetus—a favorite, he boasted, of Toussaint-Louverture. (Higginson was probably more amenable to Stoicism than Louverture; as the ironic young Henry James sharply observed in the *North*

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American Review, a slave who adhered to Epictetus's philosophy would be cheerfully quietist.) He finished and pieced together the magazine articles that became *Army Life in a Black Regiment*. But his major undertaking in Newport—"so attractive to me that were it to be my ruin in fame and fortune I should still wish to keep on"—was a novel called *Malbone*.

Malbone was an old Newport family name, but Higginson probably chose it not for local color but because Philip Malbone, his anti-hero, is a puzzling mix of bad and good, of *mal* and *bon*. "There was for him something piquant in being ... neither innocent nor guilty," Higginson writes, "but always on some delicious middle ground." Malbone is a seducer; he means no harm, but cannot resist yielding to the vicissitudes of his "multivalve heart." Both men and women find themselves drawn in by "this charming Alcibiades." His morals are loose in part because his character was over-strained by long attention to a sickly, slow-dying mother.

Strict virtue's partisan is Aunt Jane, a fifty-four-year-old spinster of "honest, steady, immovable dislikes." She has hated Malbone literally since before he was born. "Of course he is lovable," she snaps in an early scene, "and that is why I dislike him.... He ought to wear a label round his neck marked 'Dangerous,' such as they have at other places where it is slippery and brittle." The antagonism between the fluxional, Byronic young man and the skeptical, joyless old woman is electric.

The novel's plot, unfortunately, has little to do with their clash. Malbone is engaged to Aunt Jane's niece Hope. As a favor to the family, he recently retrieved Hope's half-sister Emilia from Europe, where she is said to have been in danger of eloping. He lured her back the only way he knew how, by flirting; and she has fallen in love. And so has he. To provoke him to break his engagement with Hope, Emilia becomes engaged to an amiable but dull businessman, whom Aunt Jane likens to "boiled potatoes." Malbone fails to act, and Emilia marries. "There is no passion in your veins," she reproaches him; "it is only a sort of sympathetic selfishness." Thanks to a secret stairwell, they become adulterous lovers, and are discovered by Hope. Melodramatically and somewhat confusingly, Emilia then suffers the fate of Margaret Fuller: her European lover shows up to reclaim her, just in time for her to die in a shipwreck within sight of shore.

As the second Mrs. Higginson noted in both of the books that she wrote about her husband after his death, Aunt Jane was a portrait of the first Mrs. Higginson—as acerbic as in real life, and only five years older. As Higginson himself explained in his autobiography, Philip Malbone was modeled on a friend from divinity school named William Henry Hurlbert, "a young man so handsome in his dark beauty that he seemed like a picturesque Oriental; slender, keen-eyed, raven-haired, he arrested the eye and the heart like some fascinating girl." A native of South Carolina, Hurlbert had strong whims and many talents. He left the ministry for law, then left law for journalism. He changed his name (it was originally Hurlbut) because he liked the way a stationer once misspelled it. He wrote poems and hymns, and he is probably the friend mentioned in *Army Life* who sang spirituals to Higginson long before the Civil War.

Like Higginson, Hurlbert started out a fervent abolitionist. In his sensuous travelogue *Gan-Eden; or, Pictures of Cuba*—a book lush with adjectives and tripping with subordinate clauses—he relates that it was "truly humiliating" when Cubans assumed that he, as an American, would take the pro-slavery side in an argument. But in 1862, after he escaped from a long confinement by Confederate vigilantes in Virginia, he switched to the Democratic Party, and in 1864 he sided with McClellan against Lincoln. He defected from *The New York Times* to *The New York World*, where he became the

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anti-Horace Greeley, harassing pious progressive causes for the next two decades in a pro-capitalist style praised by one fellow journalist as "exuberant, unscrupulous, and remarkable." He died in Italy in 1895, with a warrant out for his arrest on charges of perjury.

Since he lived by his wits and not by his principles, Hurlbert generally fascinated. Theodore Winthrop and Charles Kingsley also wrote novels about him; and in Winthrop's book, *Cecil Dreeme*, the Hurlbert character turns out to be a woman in disguise. Philip Malbone ends badly, but Higginson refused to condemn Hurlbert, despite his fickleness. "I never loved but one male friend with passion—and for him my love had no bounds," Higginson told his second wife. Even after Hurlbert ceased to answer his letters, Higginson continued to write him monthly. "Still, O changing child," ran one letter, "out of the depths of my charity I still believe in you and out of the depths of my heart I still love you."

FROM MORE THAN a century's distance, it is hard, and maybe futile, to try to distinguish an erotic attachment from a longing for a style of self admired but never dared. Yet I doubt that Higginson had much interest in sexual love between men. He re-married at the age of fifty-five, a year after his first wife's death, and his second marriage seems to have been as happy as his late writing was respectable and voluminous. He may not even have known that men could have sex. In *The Nation* in 1892, he regretted the lack of "personal and romantic love" in Whitman's poetry, noting that "the object always turns out to be a man and not a woman"; he seems innocent of any idea of why Whitman would make the substitution. He thought Whitman "unmanly" chiefly because during the Civil War he had served as a hospital volunteer rather than a soldier. The bard's pit-bull-like defender, William Douglas O'Connor, answered the charge forcefully: "Better be a good nurse like Walt Whitman, than a nondescript warrior like the Rev. Col. Higginson."

Like "The Monarch of Dreams," *Malbone* suggests what Higginson might have been by its compromises rather than by its achievements. What if Philip Malbone had been more courageous in his badness? What if he had been willing to go to hell for Emilia, as Huck was for Jim, or if he had been willing to go to hell merely for his own sake? As it is, he goes to Europe and "a manhood of self-denying usefulness." Like its anti-hero, the novel loses its nerve, because Higginson, who loved Hurlbert and disapproved of Whitman, could not make up his mind to be so rebellious and unconventional. He resisted his dreamy, womanly self to the end.

And yet he knew it was the best thing in him—worth writing a novel about. As Edelstein reports in his biography, the critics lampooned *Malbone* for its feminine style. "If this book had been published anonymously," an English reviewer wrote, "we should have said that it was written by an American lady who had carefully studied George Sand and Nathaniel Hawthorne." But Higginson knew different. "I have fineness," he wrote in his diary, "but some want of copiousness & fertility." His genius, he understood, had not been feminine enough. ■

CORRESPONDENCE

continued from page 4

I have never been reluctant to stand up for democratic values, even in the face of strident Chinese opposition. In 1991 I introduced the U.S.-Hong Kong Policy Act to ensure Hong Kong's economic and free-market viability in the face of its reversion to Chinese control. The idea for this measure, which was signed into law, was first suggested to me by Martin Lee, the preeminent Hong Kong pro-democracy advocate and persistent thorn in the side of China. To suggest that this legislation was blessed by the PRC or was intended to curry favor with that government is to demonstrate a glaring ignorance of the relationship between the PRC and Hong Kong. In fact, I was excoriated in the Chinese press for interfering in the mainland's internal affairs and was even taken to task by U.S. businesses who feared economic reprisals. In the end, the act proved to be prescient, as today Hong Kong is struggling to maintain its political, legal, and economic achievements.

Additionally, I authored language in last year's foreign operations bill allowing Chinese dissidents and nongovernmental organizations to conduct political and legal reform programs in China that are in America's national security interests. I have long been an active proponent of exporting American principles and freedoms abroad, particularly in China's backyard. For example, in the face of growing Chinese influence in the region, I have stood firmly by the leading democrats in Burma, East Timor, and Cambodia, many of whom have been imprisoned and tortured for their beliefs. Despite the innuendo and unwarranted mudslinging, my record speaks for itself, and I intend to continue to promote American values worldwide.

Among other things, Judis neglects to mention the fact that, just last year, I was one of only 32 senators who voted in favor of a permanent normal trading relations (PNTR) amendment offered by Senator Fred Thompson that would penalize China if it sold strategic weapons abroad. He contends that the Heritage Foundation was soft on China because it allegedly "backed off" the Thompson proposal. Yet somehow Judis cannot bring himself to acknowledge that my support of the Thompson amendment—in the face of strident opposition from the American business community and the PRC—was a strong statement of my consistently balanced and principled stand on U.S. China policy. Such an acknowledgment, of course, would be inconsistent with and inconvenient for his unsupported and unsupportable thesis.

Ultimately, Judis is forced to concede that "[t]here is no evidence" of "the buying of Mitch McConnell . . . by the People's Republic of China." The foundation of Judis's story is little more than the fact that a U.S. senator is married to an American woman with a Chinese last name whose father attended the same university as the current Chinese president. One wonders if Judis would have written his attack piece if my wife's last name were Smith instead of Chao.

MITCH MCCONNELL
United States Senator
Washington, D.C.

JOHN B. JUDIS REPLIES:
Edwin J. Feulner says I have no "facts" to back up my theories, and Mitch McConnell and Steven J. Law complain about my using unnamed sources—an unfortunate necessity when sources fear retaliation—but their letters fail to cast doubt on a single fact in my article. Feulner takes issue with what he says are "claims" and "suggestions," but the careful reader will recognize that I never claimed that the Heritage Foundation had been "bought by the PRC" or suggested that Heritage's "hard-line" Asian Studies Center director was replaced by "someone more accommodating to the PRC." What got Richard Fisher fired, according to people familiar with the case, was that he was extremely aggressive in propounding his hard-line, anti-PRC views.

What's at stake here is the influence that financial contributions have had on Heritage's and Mitch McConnell's foreign policy views. Feulner and McConnell insist money has had no effect on their views and, as evidence, assert that their views have not changed at all. In my article, I showed that Heritage's and McConnell's views *have* changed in unusual and unex-

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pected ways that parallel their experiences with financial contributors.

Heritage and McConnell cite positions that they have taken recently that are consistent with views they held a decade or more ago, but that's beside the point. Heritage still publishes excellent analyses of the Chinese military threat to Taiwan, but they are overshadowed by featured pep talks on China by former Commerce Secretary Barbara Franklin and toasts to Hong Kong's C. H. Tung and by a willingness—when pressed by Maurice Greenberg, whose Starr Foundation was a major contributor to Heritage—to alter their position on Taiwan and PNTR with China.

Before 1989 McConnell was a Jesse Helms conservative on foreign policy but appeared to have no interest in China, Hong Kong, or immigration. After he received bundled contributions from Asian Americans with a particular interest in Hong Kong immigration, McConnell played an important role in modifying the 1990 Immigration Act to include a special provision on Hong Kong and in passing a Hong Kong act in 1992 that contained a major provision on immigration. I never suggested that McConnell sponsored this legislation to "curry favor" with the Chinese, but he did insist at the time that he was not "trying to pick a fight with China."

In December 1989 McConnell had been the only Republican senator to criticize George Bush for sending emissaries on a secret mission to China after Tiananmen Square; as late as June 1992, he was still describing China's regime as "communist totalitarianism." But by 1997, after American businesses had begun raining contributions on politicians who favored unconditionally granting trade privileges to China, McConnell was trumpeting the virtues of a "new China" and promising that it would follow the example of democratic, capitalist Hong Kong.

McConnell can cite his commendable support for dissidents in East Timor and Burma, but that only reinforces questions about his relative silence on human rights in China—most recently when he hosted a speech at the University of Louisville at which the Chinese ambassador defended his government's brutal repression of Falun Gong. McConnell did back Thompson's amendment, but this former Helms protégé has embraced a position of ambiguity on the defense of Taiwan—the issue that matters most to the PRC and that has been the defining passion of conservative anti-Communists.

Law, who used to be McConnell's chief of staff, insists that Elaine Chao's failure to disclose that she was a director of Multacom was inadvertent. But Chao was sufficiently aware of her position to resign from it five days before she filed her disclosure form on January 29. And her disclosure form includes far less weighty affiliations, such as her membership in Enough Is Enough and the Household International Consumer Advisory Group.

And Multacom remains a mystery. The company appears to be a relatively small Los Angeles-area start-up, but it is involved in some very high-level joint ventures with the largest telecommunications companies in Asia, including China's Unicom, Chunghwa Telecom Company of Taiwan, and NTT Communications Corporation of Japan. Who are the investors in Multacom? How did it acquire sufficient clout with the Chinese government to enter a joint venture as a junior partner with a state company? What did Multacom expect to get out of Chao? And, if she was not being paid, what did she expect to get from Multacom? These are questions that Chao needs to answer—and she would need to answer them even if her last name were Smith.

Back to the USSR

TO THE EDITORS:

Peter Beinart's "Private Opinion" (April 23), about the media responses to the recent U.S.-China conflict, was exceptionally insightful. No one else, it seems, has pointed out that the "moral equivalence" perspective—which for so long colored the American perspective on U.S.-Soviet relations—has reemerged in relation to U.S.-China affairs. Why does our media try to be evenhanded in evaluating the EP-3 incident and the part played by public opinion in the official Chinese responses to it? I think the major reason remains the same: a reflexive skepticism about any positive aspect of our society and an associated unwillingness to be judgmental about those opposed to it.

Let me also take this opportunity to express strong endorsement of "Sullied Heritage," by John B. Judis, and your editorial, "It's Not Over" (April 23). Unhappily, the moral-equivalence impulse, high-level appeasement, and commercial influences converge in reducing the moral component of U.S. policy toward China.

PAUL HOLLANDER
Professor of Sociology
University of Massachusetts at Amherst

Not sorry

TO THE EDITORS:

Glancing over the "It's Not Over" editorial and Lawrence F. Kaplan's "Sorry" (April 23), I could have sworn I was reading *The Weekly Standard*. Twenty-four American servicemen and servicewomen were detained in an essentially hostile country. The immediate responsibility of the United States was to get them home safely. I'm a card-carrying Democrat, and President Bush and his administration make me either cringe or fume at any given moment, but in this case they made the right call. So what if the last remaining superpower sent China a letter saying "I'm sorry"? It did the trick. When helpless American citizens are in China's hands, delicate diplomacy must be the first option. I'm surprised TNR views this tactic as some kind of pantywaist copout. I thought it showed considerable savvy. Bush will have plenty of opportunities to clobber the Chinese on other occasions.

SHARI R. MCCOUL
Minneapolis, Minnesota

TO THE EDITORS:

Lawrence F. Kaplan's "Sorry," on the right's self-delusional rationalization of a China policy that is awash in money, hits the nail squarely on the head. Kaplan aptly describes a scenario wherein the ideologically true right has been outfoxed by an opportunistic money play on the part of a Wall Street crowd only too eager to lend a hand in the justification of appeasement. That the Wall Street crowd, led by anxious investors with huge bets riding on an outcome of "business as usual" in China, appears to be in charge of foreign policy when it comes to our "strategic partners" should come as no surprise to anyone familiar with the stakes involved. It is much cheaper in the short run to dumb down the issue of ideological inconsistency than to upset a Wall Street machine that has bought and paid for the freight of our current policy.

JOHN SIEGRIST
New York, New York

GOP judgment

TO THE EDITORS:

I agree with Diane Roberts that some proposals by Florida Republicans to break the Democrats' control of judge selection sound like overkill ("Holding Court," April 23). But what would be so radical about letting the governor nominate judges, subject to Senate confirmation? That, after all, is how federal judges are chosen.

Roberts seems to suggest that since Florida's governor and Senate are currently Republican, veto power over judicial nominations must be given to a strongly Democratic interest group, the trial lawyers (i.e., the Florida Bar). Does that mean that when the governor and the Senate are Democratic, Florida should give veto power to a Republican interest group—for example, the Moral Majority or anti-Castro Cubans?

HUGO S. CUNNINGHAM
Boston, Massachusetts

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Less Than Zero

IDIOCY HAS A TIME-HONORED link to illumination. "The prophet is a fool," warned Hosea, "the spiritual man is mad." The uninhibited man (I mean the really uninhibited man), the man who is not governed by norms and manners, the ridiculous man, the tasteless man, the obscene man, the man who does not think reasonably and realistically, the man who never stops laughing: the figure has taken many forms, and one of them is the *meshuggene*. Civilization makes craziness look like a variety of courage, of intellectual elevation. For this reason, the spiritual authority of the *meshuggene* (Yiddish for *idiota de sapientia*) has been deservedly great. Rube Goldberg, Mickey Katz, Mel Brooks: they are divine screwballs, screaming angels of relief. By making you coarse, they make you fine. By making you stupid, they make you smart. There is philosophy in their lunacy.

THOSE WERE MY RUEFUL THOUGHTS a few weeks ago, when I left the St. James Theatre with the sickening feeling that Mel Brooks may be normal. For there is nothing radical about *The Producers*. It is merely the most spectacular dinner theater that Grossinger's never produced. The outrageous thing about the show is how little it outrages. ("I always had the biggest hits. / The biggest bathrooms at the Ritz. / My showgirls had the biggest tits!") In this regard it is the enemy of the movie, whose every frame was outrageous. I understand that some of this decline is not the show's fault. Shock is no longer available in American culture, though American reality abounds in it. In 1968, when Brooks made a comedy of Hitler, Hitler was not yet a platitude. And time has dulled the edges of Brooks's antic conception in other ways, too. The maniacs in his story—which is to say, every man and woman in it—now seem like lovable old friends. And "Springtime for Hitler" can be experienced only nostalgically, like one of those oldies shows at the Garden, or a Stones concert, at which you cheer wildly for your own youth and then begin to wonder in annoyance why once is never enough. It is also not the show's fault that Zero Mostel had a previous engagement in paradise. But Nathan Lane's big, big, big performance is just an award waiting to happen. It lacks the recklessness that is required for Holocaust comedy. And the casting of Matthew Broderick is a terrible concession to the gentiles. This, Leo Bloom? He is handsome. He is a perfect stranger to dementia. He has the appearance of a man who does not worry. He would never fall on his keys. He only squeaks. (*Barukh atah adenoid....*)

WHAT IS GENUINELY HILARIOUS, BY contrast, is Frank Rich's contention that there is something subversive about this shtick of shticks, that the revival of *The Producers* represents an emancipation for American life. "*The Producers* is a surprise landslide vote," Rich solemnly observed, "against not just political correctness in mass entertainment but the kind of show-business corporate-think that creates such bland pop culture, which is carefully laundered to offend no potential customer.... While Mel Brooks is far more sweet-spirited than Eminem—to put it mildly—the hunger for his unreconstructed assault on the jugular is a similarly spontaneous expression of widespread discontent with the pasteurized fare that is our dull daily entertainment bread." I wish to record that the only part of the human body on which Mel Brooks has made no assault in *The Producers* is the jugular. It is the delightful inoffensiveness of the show that has people jumping up and down in their seats. It has been a long time, certainly, since I have seen anything more "bland" and "pasteurized" than the central-casting faggotry of Roger de Bris and Carmen Ghia. ("I see a line of beautiful girls / dressed as storm troopers, / each one a gem, / with leather boots and whips / on their hips. / It's risqué, dare I say / S and M!") Anyway, you do not establish the legitimacy of offensive speech by emptying it of all seriousness.

MOREOVER, BROADWAY IS JUST Broadway. The proposition is a heresy in Manhattan, I know; but then Manhattan is just Manhattan. In the wake of *The Producers*, however, the religion of Broadway is flourishing again—which is exactly right, because the religion of Broadway is the true subject of *The Producers*. An editorial in *The New York Times* called "Springtime for Showbiz" instructed that "[t]here is always something sincere at heart when Broadway reflects on itself, even when Mr. Brooks does it," and celebrated "the cruel meritocracy of Broadway ... a place where once in a blue moon a hit comes along that makes everyone in the audience feel lucky to have seats." Success is so *moving*. And the spiritualization of the box office was to be found also in John Lahr's review in *The New Yorker*. He began by noting excitedly that "[o]n the day after it opened, 'The Producers' sold thirty-three thousand five hundred and ninety-eight tickets, taking in a total of $3,029,197 (it will recoup its eleven-million dollar investment—almost twelve times the cost of the movie—in thirty-six weeks); these are the biggest numbers ever in the history of Broadway," as if this arithmetic had any bearing whatever on the quality of what transpires on stage, and he queerly concluded: "If our President won't sign up for the Kyoto agreement to protect the atmosphere, we can still sign up for the Brooks agreement, which is sure to protect our inner environment." (Lahr provided also an analysis of the historical significance of Brooks's show: it has finally broken the spell of Vietnam on the Broadway musical. For "Vietnam had put paid to the musical's thematic stock-in-trade: optimism, innocence, and abundance." I had not realized this; but henceforth I will hold Robert McNamara responsible for the Edsel, flexible response, Vietnam, the debt crisis, *and* Andrew Lloyd Webber.)

WHAT IS THIS PREPOSTEROUS EXAGgeration of the significance of show business if not the world according to Max Bialystock, and also the world according to Mel Brooks? Self-love is all that is really wild at the St. James. Unlike Brooks's movie, Brooks's show is gaggingly sentimental, and mainly about itself. "It ain't no myst'ry, / if it's politics or hist'ry. / The thing you gotta know is, / ev'rything is show biz": so sings Adolf Elizabeth Hitler in his big number. Of course, it is precisely because everything is not showbiz that *The Producers* is so hugely funny. Without Auschwitz, not a laugh. But in an interview with Mike Wallace, Brooks made this hugely unfunny remark: "Hitler was part of this incredible idea that you could put Jews in concentration camps and kill them. And how do you get even?... There's only one way to get even. You have to bring him down with ridicule. Because if you stand on a soapbox and you match him with rhetoric, you're just as bad as he is. But if you can make people laugh at him, then you're one up on him." Entertainment as the answer to evil? Oh, never mind. The man is a *meshuggene*.

LEON WIESELTIER

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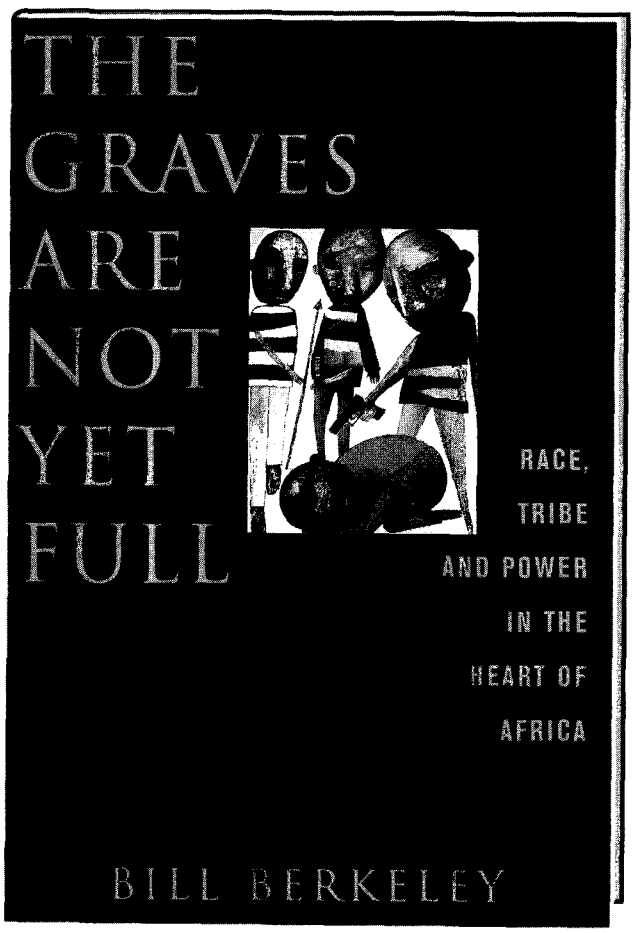

THE GRAVES ARE NOT YET FULL

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BILL BERKELEY

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BILL BERKELEY has been an editorial writer at *The New York Times* and for more than a decade reported on African affairs for *The Atlantic Monthly, The New Republic, The New York Times Magazine* and *The Washington Post.*

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